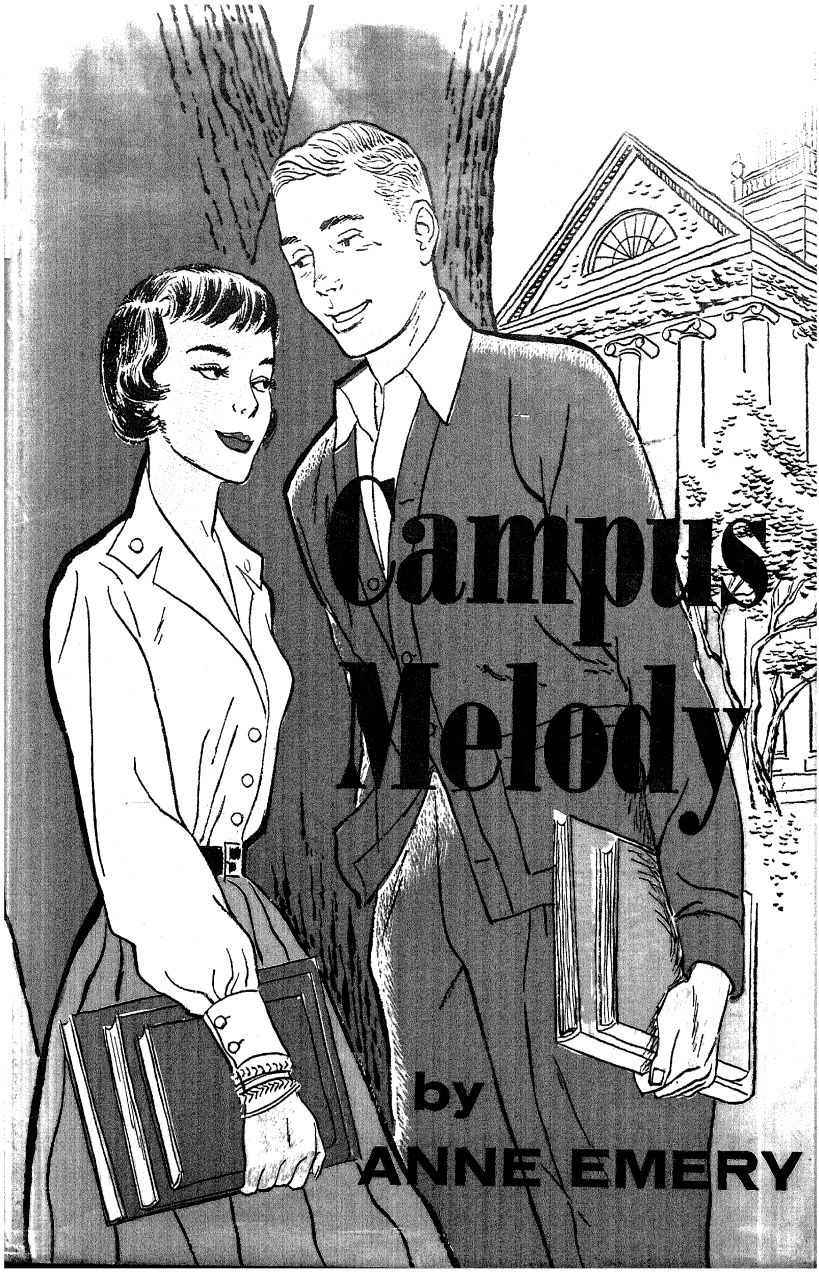
Campus
Melody
by
ANNE EMERY

CAMPUS MELODY

Anne Emery

Jean Burnaby, getting ready to go away to college for the first time, hates to say good-by to Scotty, with whom she has spent most of the summer after graduation. But she wants to be very sure of herself before she gets serious about anyone—especially, she tells herself, anyone as nice as Scotty.

When she gets to Overton College, Jean finds that she has a congenial roommate, and that school life is very stimulating. But she also finds unexpected problems. Her money doesn't stretch as far as she thought it would; the rules for freshmen seem childish and irritating to her; there are so many things to do that she is horrified to find her grades slipping badly; and even her music suffers.

But the biggest problem is with Phil Stewart, a campus hero. He and a glamorous senior, Pamela, make campus news continually with their tempestuous romance, their repeated quarrels and reconciliations. Phil has a reputation for breaking the hearts of freshman girls in the interludes of his twosome with Pamela. But when he becomes interested in Jean, she decides

(Continued on back flap)

Jacket Illustration by Richard Horwitz

0012-0015
32-0123

MAI AUG 2 1978

3 1148 00515 4463

MAI NOV 2 5 19?8

MAI DEC 1 6 1978

MAI JUN 3 0 1979

OCT 2 9 1988

Emery, Anne, 1907- 64-42446
Campus melody.

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CAMPUS MELODY

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Senior Year
Going Steady
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Vagabond Summer
High Note, Low Note
Campus Melody

By ANNE EMERY

CAMPUS MELODY

THE WESTMINSTER PRESS
Philadelphia

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 55–5315

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

My appreciation to
Barbara Van Slyke and Catherine Ashley
who have contributed much
to the making of this book

Young Adult
2.95 61-2446

CAMPUS MELODY

[1]

THE NEW MOON RISING IN THE WARM SEPTEMBER NIGHT WAS A tiny silver crescent breaking the black water that stretched into the sky. Overhead the stars shone mistily faint in the still, warm darkness.

In the circle of Scotty's arm, Jean Burnaby sighed happily and laid her head against his shoulder.

"How many new moons have we watched this summer?" she asked.

He counted for her. "The first one was in June," he said. "Right after graduation — remember?"

She remembered. He had sent her a corsage of gardenias, which was now dried and brown and still faintly fragrant, laid away with her most cherished mementos. He had asked her to go to an open-air concert on the campus with him that night, the first real date she'd ever had with him. And after that they had gone together all summer.

Jean had admired and dreamed about Scotty last year and when he had asked her to go out with him she had felt a deep satisfaction, as if he were the one she had been waiting for all her life. They liked the same things — tennis, swimming, music, books; they laughed at the same jokes, he understood her most abbreviated allusions.

But she kept remembering how much she had liked Jeff Sutton and how painful it had been last year when he fell in love with her and she had not cared enough for him. With Scotty she wanted no mistake. She wanted him to be definitely interested, but not too much. Not until she knew her own mind.

She glanced at him now. His red head was slightly tilted, his gray eyes half closed as he watched the rising moon. At her glance his eyes came around to meet hers and he grinned at her, squeezing her shoulders companionably.

"I suppose the moon was just like that in Colorado," she remarked, referring to his first year and a half of college, before he had transferred to Northern University, here in Sherwood, because of his mother's ill-health.

"Oh, sure," he agreed with a teasing smile. "Only there it came up behind mountains instead of over the water."

She wondered with whom he had watched the moon rise in Colorado, and tried to ignore the twinge of jealousy.

He helped her to her feet and they picked their way across the blocks of stone, slipping a little on the slanting surfaces. As they moved away from the water into the path along the lake-front park, the campus clock struck the hour with clanging strokes.

Scotty tucked her arm inside of his and matched his steps to hers.

"When do you leave for Overton?"

"Next Saturday. I guess I'll like it — but there's an awful lot to do this week." Jean spoke as if she hardly cared about going away.

"When I went out to Colorado the first time, I forgot so much stuff the folks had to send out four different bundles."

"I was so excited when I got the scholarship last May," said Jean as if she still could not believe it, "and now that I'm leaving in a week I wonder sometimes —"

She let her voice trail off, not wanting to explain what she wondered about.

"Everything has been so perfect this summer," she said at last. "Right this minute I hate to leave home."

He looked down at her and held her arm close to him.

"This *has* been a perfect summer," he said. "Sometimes a fellow wonders how long things can last."

"Why, Scotty," she took a light tone, "are you being cynical? Why wouldn't things go on when they're satisfactory—?" She was getting entangled in her own words and she stopped.

"Oh, I don't know," he shrugged. "It just seems the older you get the less you know about things. Look at that summer I was going with Sally. We thought it was for keeps and by the end of summer we found it wasn't. And you liked Jeff last year, and then it didn't work out."

"He cared too much," said Jean almost inaudibly.

"That's what I mean," said Scotty. "It didn't last. After a while you get careful. You begin to wonder how you're going to know whether something is the real thing or not. After all, you don't want to fool yourself too many times. Do you?"

Jean thought, I'm almost sure right now how I feel about Scotty. It was never like this with Jeff. But with Scotty I've got to be very, very sure.

They turned into the Burnaby walk and sat down on the steps in the darkness of the overhanging honeysuckle.

"When I think of your going away," he said, "I get a sunk feeling inside — you know what I mean? I wish we had more time—"

He faced her and took both her hands. "No use talking about how I feel about things, Jean. I wouldn't want to tie you down when you'll be at another college. You'll want to date and go out—" he sounded as if it took an effort to be thus unselfish.

Then he grinned and hugged her shoulders. "Why don't you just give it up and go to Northern with me!"

"Why don't I?" she choked back a hysterical giggle. "I guess I'm stuck with a scholarship now. But there's always next year."

"Oh, I'll be around a long time yet." He rose and pulled her to her feet. "I'd better be getting along," he said as he took her up to the door. "Gotta report to the fraternity house tomorrow for rushing business, and from then on I'll be tied up every night."

"I'll tell you good-by now until next Christmas," she tried to keep it matter-of-fact. "I'm leaving early Saturday morning—about six."

He took both her hands again. "I'm going to miss you, Jeanie."

"I'll miss you too, Scotty," she tried to say it calmly and was dismayed to find her throat tightening up. "I'll write and tell you how everything goes."

"Will you?" he sounded urgent. "I'll answer every letter, Jean—"

"Oh, you'll be busy with half a dozen girls," she teased, wishing the lump in her throat would go away.

"It might be easier that way," he agreed. And then he was holding her tight. "I wish you weren't going," he muttered. She raised her face to his and he kissed her, a long, hard kiss that left her shaken.

"Be good, have fun, and don't you dare forget to write," he told her. And then he was gone.

When she lay down on her twin bed in the room she shared with Sally, she knew she wasn't going to sleep. The night seemed unbearably warm, although she had not noticed it when she was with Scotty, and her mind and heart were racing again through the evening just past.

Scotty had kissed her.

It seemed as if she had been waiting for a year and a half for Scotty to kiss her, and tonight it had happened. She could be in love with Scotty, she thought, if she just let go and stopped worrying. Perhaps it was a good thing that she was going away, although right now she wished she weren't.

When she awoke it was hot again, the seventh day in a row that the heat had broken ninety. Downstairs she could hear family noises as the younger Burnabys prepared for the first day of school. Betsy was excited about entering seventh grade; Jimmy looked forward to fourth, Ricky sounded nonchalant, as he imagined a sophomore in high school should sound, but underneath Jean could hear tension and crisis.

"Where's my wallet? For Pete's sake, I just laid it down a minute ago on this desk. Mom, this is the limit! Those kids took it and here I'm almost missing my bus —"

In the other bed Sally stirred. But not even the first day of school could waken her easily.

Mrs. Burnaby was soothing Ricky, whose wallet was found under the morning paper, the front door slammed after him, the steps creaked as he ran down, and the bus stopped with a whistle of brakes.

Jean waited dreamily until everyone had left for school, half wishing she could sleep as late as Sally did, half scorning her older sister for not bouncing brightly out of bed. Then she showered and dressed in a sleeveless blouse and shorts, and went downstairs.

"There's orange juice in the refrigerator," her mother said, as Jean came into the kitchen. Mrs. Burnaby looked cool and fresh as she sipped her second cup of coffee while she wrote out "Things to Be Done Today."

"You ought to finish your shopping today and tomorrow,"

she said briskly. "At least the stores are air-conditioned."

"I suppose so." Jean felt listless already.

The humid warmth rested heavily on Sherwood. The branches of the yellowing trees hung limp and breathless in the turgid air, and daily the papers explained cheerfully why Sherwood suffered this record windless humid weather in September.

"Cool Wave on Way, Due Thursday," Jean read the headline aloud. "I probably won't live that long," she tossed the paper aside. "I don't think it's ever going to be cool again."

She had put off looking for skirts until this week. She needed another sweater and red high-heeled pumps. She wanted to get a haircut before Saturday.

"Have you made that list?" her mother reminded her again. "You'll want your typewriter and radio. You're sure to leave something if you haven't a list, and I *hate* to mail packages. What did you decide about curtains and blankets?"

"I expect a letter from Melissa today," Jean said, "and then everything will be settled about the room." Melissa Girard had written early in the summer to introduce herself and tell Jean that she understood they were to be roommates at Overton, and since then they had corresponded regularly.

The telephone rang sharply, and she jerked to her feet. Of course it would be Scotty, she thought, lifting the receiver.

"Hello? Oh! Why, Jeff! I didn't know you were in town. How nice to hear from you—"

Her heart was still frantically beating in anticipation and she tried not to allow her disappointment to show in her voice.

"No, I don't think I'll visit the high school this week—I'd probably feel out of place. . . . Well, it would be nice to see you, Jeff, but I've got so much shopping left to do, and today I've got to have lunch with the girls—"

She wondered if he would want a date and what she would say if he did. The conversation became stilted and when he rang off she felt a mixture of relief and regret. She had liked him so much until he had become too serious. That was why she had to be so careful about Scotty.

She moved over to her grand piano and ran her fingers idly down a C-major scale and up the arpeggios. The piano sounded rich and full-toned in spite of the heat, but the keys were sticky under her fingers and she had no energy to play anything. She turned away and went upstairs to face her half-filled trunk and make out the list her mother had asked for.

Sally was up at last, trying to choose between two cool dresses.

"I hate to wear pink at this time of the year, but it would be cooler than the dark one," she said.

"Why not wear shorts?"

"Oh, I'm going to the house for lunch," said Sally. "We're beginning rushing this week."

Sally was a junior at Northern University where she was majoring in education. She had announced her engagement to Bob Carlson last spring, and hoped to get married as soon as she graduated and got her teaching certificate.

Jean looked at the ring Bob had given Sally a month ago.

"Maybe I'll come back next year," she said broodingly. "I don't know that going away is all it's reputed to be. Lots of reasons for staying home—"

Sally shot her a perceptive glance. "You were out with Scotty last night, weren't you? I thought you were seeing a lot of him this summer."

"Did you?" Jean said coolly. "It's been casual, mostly—"

"I've always thought it would be nice to have Scotty in the family," Sally said wistfully, "even though I wasn't the right one for him."

"Well, maybe—" Jean searched for the right words, "I like Scotty, he's a wonderful person. But how can you know? I liked Jeff once too—"

There was a silence while Sally fastened some white summer jewelry.

"Probably you'll find someone at Overton," she forecast diplomatically. "When you do, pick a good one. I'd hate to bring the wrong man into this family. There's the mail."

Glad to get away from the subject of Scotty and love, Jean ran down to see if the expected letter from her roommate had arrived. The square envelope was there, postmarked Quilby, Ohio. Melissa wrote that she had curtains for their room of the darlingest material—kind of pink-and-blue plaid, only not exactly plaid, with harmonizing bedspreads.

Good heavens, thought Jean, how ghastly! And this I have to live with! She felt she could not face a year in a room with pink-and-blue plaid that was not exactly plaid, and a revulsion against Melissa choked her. She wanted to write a strong letter announcing that she would bring green and yellow, since she could not tolerate pink and blue.

Frustrated, she read on through four pages of typed chatter, and at the end of it she stared bleakly at the portrait above the mantel of seven-year-old Sally in a pink dress. A week from today, she thought, I'll be stuck in a pink-and-blue room. There ought to be some kind of law— Despondent, she sought out her mother to tell her the ugly news.

"Don't get upset until you see what is happening," her mother advised her. "Mrs. Girard is very generous to provide curtains and spreads, no matter what color they are. Have you any idea how much those things cost?"

Jean bit her lip and kept back her protest. It might be easier

to feel appreciative in cooler weather. Today everything was exasperating.

Rick came home from high school, smug in his sophomore status and disparaging about the new freshmen.

"Gosh, you should see the freshmen roaming around lost in that building," he said with condescending amusement. "Some of them look like babies. I saw a couple of cute girls, though."

"What happened to that little Rosemary you were going with last spring?" Jean asked.

He shrugged with great indifference.

"How should I know? I just got tired of her, that's all. All she could talk about was what good grades she got, and who wants to go with a brain?"

Jean agreed. "I should think it might have been kind of humiliating for you to have to talk about grades!"

Rick looked at her sharply. "There wasn't anything wrong with my grades," he told her. "I passed everything, didn't I? And, Mom, that reminds me: Do I have to use the books Sally and Jean had? You should see them, you should just *see* them! All scribbled up with Jeff and Scotty and Hank and Al Carter! For Pete's sake!"

Jean blushed at the reminder of her sophomore crushes and said hastily, "All you have to do is erase them, can't you?"

"Not the ones in ink," said Ricky bitingly. "There's no room for me to write anything — that's what I object to!"

Betsy came in from seventh grade with news.

"I've got Miss Colwell for math," she reported, "and guess what she said! She said, 'Are you Ricky Burnaby's sister?' I was embarrassed to admit that I was" — she cast a glance at Rick to see how he took this aspersion — "and she said —" She paused impressively. "'Do tell Rick hello for me. I always en-

joyed having him in my class!' Can you *imagine?*"

Rick swaggered. "Why, naturally," he said complacently. "All the dames remember Rick Burnaby! Why not?"

"Must be that devastating charm we hear tell about," murmured Jean. "I seem to recall that she threatened to flunk you back in seventh grade."

"She just didn't understand me," Rick said pensively. "Maybe I ought to go around and visit the old girl — what do you think?"

"I think you might as well stay away," said Betsy crushingly. "Why disillusion her?"

He fell upon her and tousled her black hair, and she struggled to get away, protesting furiously, "Ricky, you let me alone!"

"Stop it, children," commanded Mrs. Burnaby. "I've got to check Jean's list again. Have you marked everything? Sheets, blankets, pillow slips?"

"I'll do it tomorrow," said Jean. "I haven't had a minute, and I'm going to Joyce's house for supper with the girls."

"I don't see why you have to spend most of this crowded week meeting your high school friends for lunch and tea and dinner," said her mother, in the tone of one who has repeated herself several times on the subject.

"But, Mother," cried Jean, "I won't be seeing these girls again all year — at least not until Christmas! We've been together for four years and now we're all going in different directions —"

"Honestly," said her mother in some exasperation, "anyone would think you were twelve instead of eighteen, Jean. You acted more grown-up last June than you're acting this week. Pull yourself together."

Part of her mind told her that her mother was right, and the

other part protested bitterly that her mother simply did not understand how she felt about growing up and leaving her friends. And then the days were gone and it was Friday night. Jean had not found the red slippers, nor had she had time to look for a gray flannel skirt. Meeting the girls daily, she whipped up as much emotion as any of them, and in the orgy of farewell sentiment even Scotty receded into the background.

When the alarm went off on Saturday morning, she thought drowsily that it must be the middle of the night. And then she remembered: this was the Day of Departure. Today she was going to college. A small rush of reluctant excitement trembled through her, and she dressed hurriedly in the new fall suit of beige tissue tweed she had bought to arrive in.

In the kitchen the red-edged ruffled curtains blew in a cool breeze, fresh and aromatic with late summer, bacon was frying, coffee was percolating. Jean didn't think she could eat a mouthful, but she set dishes on the table and mixed orange juice, thinking about this being her last breakfast at home.

"Now you understand about finances," her father said, in a final reminder. "Your scholarship has taken care of tuition; board and room are paid. I'm depositing this amount for you in a checking account, to cover personal expenses, books, fees, clothes, railroad tickets home, tooth paste, shampoo — everything for the first semester. It won't go as far as you think, so try to plan ahead carefully."

Jean nodded competently. "I can manage, Dad. It seems like plenty." He looked uncertain and she patted his hand. "Your daughter is all grown up now, Dad. Off your mind. Don't give it a thought."

He smiled at her with a mixture of tenderness and irony.

"If you don't have to write for money before Christmas, I'll be surprised. But if you do, you'll be surprised, because there

won't be any more till next semester. Now are you sure everything is in the car? Let's get going — "

It was five minutes to six. Jean inspected the car once more, with her mother checking a list beside her. Two suitcases, six dress boxes, her typewriter, her big shaggy stuffed lion for her bed, three tulle formals in a dress bag, the winter coat she could not get into the trunk, her reading lamp.

" So you're on your way! "

She whirled around to face Scotty.

" Scotty, how nice to see you again! I hated to go off — "

" I hated to let you go without saying good-by once more."

His hair was coppery in the slanting rays of the early sun, and his gray eyes looked more serious than his mouth, which was smiling. He stood six inches taller than Jean's five feet four inches, and she looked up at him.

" You look pretty smooth this morning," he said. " Cute hairdo."

" Do you like it? "

She put her hand up to her hair, clipped short and brushed into a " duck's tail." The short cut, which had proved undependable for many of her friends, was exactly right for Jean. She had a subtle style which her friends tried to describe as elfin or pixie, meaning that it was fun to watch her expressive face with slim, high cheekbones and contagious smile.

Now, looking up at Scotty, she chattered about the beautiful day, the loaded car, the last-minute details that had been taken care of or not taken care of, not daring to leave a space of silence between them.

" I appreciate your getting up so early," she said at last.

Her father was at the wheel, her mother was beside him, the door was open and waiting for Jean. " I guess we're off. Oh, Scotty — "

He was holding both her hands, but of course he couldn't kiss her, not in front of her parents at six o'clock in the morning.

"I wanted to see you before," he said in a low voice, gripping her hands tight, "but every night was scheduled at the house till midnight. Maybe it was just as well. But have a wonderful time — and you will write, won't you?" He dropped her hands and stepped back.

"I'll write," she promised, getting in the car, "as often as you do."

"See you at Christmas!"

He closed the door after her and waited while they moved away. Jean waved as they turned the corner and then he was out of sight.

She stared soberly out of the window as they drove through Sherwood, thinking about Scotty, about leaving home and going to a strange town to live with a girl she had never seen, with pink-and-blue curtains.

"We couldn't have asked for a lovelier day to drive down," her mother remarked, turning around from the front seat.

"M-m-m-m," Jean agreed, her thoughts spinning indecisively.

The trees were still green with the bronzy cast of approaching fall. Under the cloudless sky the leaves floated down, scant and reluctant. The early breeze had died away and everything seemed to have stopped momentarily to let her enjoy the clear sky, the cool fresh air, the lazy, drifting, spinning leaves. It was the kind of day that called one to go somewhere, to seek adventure, to ride out upon the road. And Jean was finally on the road.

Suddenly she was excited again, as she had been last spring. She was on her way to college, and now she could hardly wait to get there.

[2]

JEAN'S ROOM WAS IN HOUGHTON HOUSE, THE OLDEST OF FOUR women's dormitories at Overton College. An old brick building with high ceilings and Victorian woodwork, the floors slippery with age, the stairs grooved and creaking, it had the prettiest setting of any of the dorms, overlooking the new library, the older campus buildings, and the curve of the Ohio River, beyond which lay the Kentucky hills.

From her bay window on the third floor Jean overlooked the main entrance to the dorm, stretches of rolling lawn, the town itself, and the hills on the horizon beyond the river.

She loved everything about the college and her room, including the pink-and-blue curtains she had dreaded. They had turned out to be a dusty aqua with accents of coral and brown in impressionistic squares. The bedspreads were brown corduroy, and Melissa had contributed six lounging pillows covered in coral. Twin bookcases flanked twin study desks, with coral blotters, set in the bay window, and each girl thought the other's collection of books looked fascinating. But there had been no time for reading in that first week of school.

Melissa arrived the day after Jean did, slim and petite, with light brown hair and blue eyes, blue-framed glasses that were becoming to her delicate features, and a mouth that was wide

when she smiled and shapely when she did not. She was so graceful that Jean felt clumsy beside her. They liked each other from the beginning.

They spent the first week together listening to orientation lectures on the purpose of college, filling out questionnaires on what they hoped to find there, attending discussions on possible careers and courses of study. And with Melissa, Jean had become acquainted with Overton, a quiet village of ancient elms and oaks and white frame houses, where the shops, filled with fascinating things, catered to the student trade. Jean was glad she still had a skirt and red slippers to shop for.

They had gone to two parties for freshman girls, had bought two record albums at the Campus Book and Record Shop, where the proprietor served coffee while the students browsed, had had one of the famous milk shakes at the Sweet Shop, the favorite village hangout for students, and finally, on Monday after orientation week, had stood in line with two hundred other freshman girls in the big gymnasium to register for classes. Jean felt as if she had lived here all her life.

Now she put one of the new records on Melissa's record player and listened as she looked over her schedule of classes again.

English A, freshman composition and literature, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at eight in the morning. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at eight, history of music.

"I still say you're out of your head to line up six eight o'clock classes," said Melissa, looking over her shoulder. "Didn't anyone ever tell you those are poison?"

"Oh, I don't mind getting up in the morning," Jean said airily. "I always did at home. Besides, after high school beginning at eight fifteen every day, this ought to be easy."

"I should have been holding your hand when you signed

your life away," Melissa said. "Ah, well, if you survive the first semester you'll know better next time."

"There wasn't any other time for these classes anyway," Jean protested. "With practice hours from ten to eleven and two to three every day — that cut out the other English A classes, and theory at one on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday took care of the other music history time. I was just stuck, that's all."

"French at one on Tuesday and Thursday, and piano lessons and gym at nine, the rest of the time — " Melissa commented, studying Jean's schedule. "You've got a full life, baby. But I guess music works out that way."

"I guess so," Jean agreed. She felt a pleasurable excitement in looking forward to the first day of classes on Wednesday, September 23, but evidently you weren't supposed to express too much enthusiasm about work.

"Tomorrow classes begin," she said, as the record ended. "Let's get Dotty Frank and celebrate tonight at the Snack Bar."

Dotty was a sophomore in the art department. She had the room next to their own, and couldn't tolerate her roommate, a mousy, timid girl named Alice. Fortunately Alice had found friends of her own, and never bothered Dotty, who was kind to her in spite of her lack of compatibility.

Dotty was an angular brunette who would have been homely if she had not cultivated a highly individual style of dress and carriage. She had only a few friends by deliberate choice, but they were devoted to her. She and Jean and Melissa had made a threesome since the day they met.

"Most people I loathe," she said with dark conviction, closing her door behind her as they went out of the room. "Did you ever notice how many idiots there are? Naturally I'd get one for a roommate. The percentages would guarantee that. But I

learned long ago that people are like that, and what's the use of complaining? "

Jean laughed, and they went down two flights of creaking stairs to the first floor hall. Approaching them from the main entrance was a girl whom Jean had met at the freshman parties. Olive-skinned, with black hair and strong, sharply defined black brows, she cast a look of recognition at Jean and her rather sullen mouth curved slightly. Automatically Jean smiled and said, " Hello."

Outside the door she said to Dotty: " What's her name? I met her last week, but I can't remember — there were so many."

" Rose Dorian," said Dotty promptly. " Freshman, school of music. Her roommate's from my home town — Sis Fletcher. Rose comes from Lansing, Michigan, where her father is a big dealer in Oriental rugs. She brought the most lush Orientals for her room."

" What does she play? " Jean asked.

" Violin," replied Dotty. " Sis says she's good, but odd. Broody and silent. Buckets of money and still she's unhappy. Can you imagine? "

They walked along the path that led to Fraley Hall, colloquially known as Rec Hall where the recreational facilities were located, including the Snack Bar.

This evening Fraley Hall was filled with students playing table tennis, billiards, bowling, looking at television, and beginning a bridge tournament. The Snack Bar was crowded, and the three girls moved slowly between the tables looking for an empty spot.

" Dotty! " a tall girl with blond pageboy hair was waving in their direction from a corner table surrounded by a half circle

of padded bench and two chairs.

"Sis!" cried Dotty jubilantly. "You know Melissa — and this is Jean Burnaby, Melissa's roommate."

"Plenty of room here," said the blond girl. She introduced the four girls sitting with her, who crowded together to make another space on the bench, and Jean sat down there while Dotty and Melissa took the chairs.

"We were just talking about you," Dotty said, reaching for a menu and thrusting it at Jean. "We saw your roommate in the hall on our way out. How's she doing?"

"Rose?" Sis rolled her eyes with an air of long-suffering. "She was cheerful yesterday for half an hour. Today she's brooding again. It must be the artistic temperament. Who'd you get for French, finally?"

"LeMaire," said Dotty. "I had to shuffle three other classes to get him. And I just missed Harley for English. It was a near thing."

"I got Harley," said Jean. "What's wrong with him? It was the only hour of the day I could take freshman English, and he had it."

"If you've already got him, there's no point in my saying anything against him," said Dotty kindly. "I had him last year, bless his little pointed head."

Sis suggested: "You can always change next semester — if you can, I mean. Music courses do snarl up your program." She sat up alertly. "There's Pamela Johnson — and Phil."

Discreetly all eyes turned toward the door where a handsome couple stood looking about the crowded room. The girl, tall, blond, poised, with a regal carriage, looked up at the youth with her. His face reminded Jean of an eagle, with dark, challenging eyes and an aquiline nose, and a small thrill shot through her and stirred her with an alien wish that she could

be the kind of glamour girl he would be attracted to. She laughed at her own folly, suppressing a sigh, and watched Phil and Pamela go out again.

"The campus romance," Dotty advised Jean in a low voice. "They're seniors this year, and they've been going together and quarreling and making up since they were freshmen. She's one of our senior counselors at Houghton House — you saw her at the house, didn't you? Some of the students are always making bets on whether Phil and Pamela will stick together or not. When they quarrel it shakes the campus."

"Do they both go out with other people when they break up?"

"Oh, certainly. Pamela even took another boy's pin last spring. But something always brings them together again."

"How can they stand it?" Jean wondered. "Quarreling and uncertainty and everyone gossiping about their affairs?"

"They thrive on it," said Dotty. "They're big shots on campus, and they expect people to talk about them. Children, we'd better start home. It's quarter of ten and rules are rules."

Jean's hand flew to her mouth. "I forgot to sign out!" she exclaimed. "Melissa, why didn't you remind me?"

"I forgot all about it too." Melissa looked appalled.

Freshmen were required to be in the house by eight o'clock four nights a week. Two nights, considered "date nights," they were permitted to be out until ten. On Saturdays they might stay out till twelve thirty. But to be out after eight, on any night, freshmen must sign their cards, which were filed on a board in the hall near the main entrance.

"This is so ridiculous," Jean panted in protest, as they ran at a trotting pace through the sweet September night. "Why, I could always stay out later than this at home!"

"But you're not at home," Melissa reminded her. "I feel as

if my mother were taking me across the street by the hand, but I guess we'll get used to it."

"I can't bear to think of what Mrs. Buxton will say!" Jean groaned.

The housemother was a stately lady with lavender-tinted gray hair who talked in platitudes about her obligations to her position and her girls.

"I always say that here at Houghton House we are one big happy family," she had told them on her first meeting with the girls. "I like to think of our rules as the three R's: reliability, responsibility, and respect for each other. Those three R's will give us the fourth R — results!"

Jean couldn't stand Mrs. Buxton from that first day.

The girls ran up the flight of steps to the first floor as fast as their failing wind would permit and found themselves, breathless and gasping, facing the housemother who had their cards in her hand.

"You didn't sign out," she said with a smile which was meant to be kind and patient. "That is our first rule, my dears."

"I'm sorry," said Jean, trying to think of an excuse and unable to. "I'm afraid we forgot."

"Being sorry doesn't help matters much, does it?" Mrs. Buxton smiled cheerily. "I am responsible to your parents for your morals, your conduct, and your study habits. And the only way I can cope with such a heavy responsibility is to have careful attention to the rules. Because," she said happily, with a gleam of inspiration at offering a piece of irresistible logic, "minor infractions lead to major infractions. We must not weaken the foundation lest the walls crumble."

"We'll remember next time," Jean mumbled, feeling like a kindergartner.

"I'm sure you will," Mrs. Buxton agreed amiably. "We're

not surprised that freshmen find it hard to get used to our ways," she went on, as if freshmen had had no upbringing before coming to Overton, " but we do feel that the sooner everyone is accustomed to co-operation, the happier life will be for everyone. Don't you agree? "

Melissa had regained her breath. " We agree entirely, Mrs. Buxton," she said obligingly. " Thank you *so* much. Good night."

Mrs. Buxton looked pleased, if puzzled, at the thanks, and Jean wondered, giggling with Melissa as they climbed to the third floor, if it was hypocritical to agree with someone you disliked about rules you didn't believe in. And what else could you do?

[3]

BY THE TIME SHE HAD BEEN ATTENDING CLASSES FOR A WEEK JEAN felt as much at home with her instructors and her classes as she had at Sherwood High School.

She knew why the girls tried to avoid Mr. Harley: he taught in a droning monotone that was almost impossible to pay attention to, and he seemed always to be repeating, word for word, the text she had studied the night before. He was a small, spare man, with sandy hair and a scant mustache above a prim mouth, who looked always at his notes and almost never at his class. After taking ten pages of notes on paragraph structure, Jean could find nothing in those pages that stimulated her to want to write a paragraph. But the assignments, dull as they were, required a great deal of work and research.

French, with M. LeMaire, was a different matter. He was sparkling and vivacious in his conversation and composition class, and required so little work that Jean was able to coast along easily on her high school French, with almost no studying.

She was fascinated with Corliss' course in history of music, and wanted to buy dozens of records to illustrate his lectures. Mr. Corliss said: "There was a recording just announced this week of medieval troubadour songs, accompanied on a lute. Listen to this, and see how familiar some of the note sequences

are — " Jean loved the record he played for them, and could hardly restrain herself from going straight down to the Campus Record Shop and buying it for her own collection. Mr. Corliss set the ancient music in a context of personalities and events that stirred Jean to real excitement. History was one of her favorite subjects anyway, and thus related to music it became delightful.

Her class in music theory should have been stimulating, and unfortunately was not. Part of it came very easily. But part of the theory was too mathematical for her temperament, and the teacher, Miss Grover, was a gentle personality, rather dull, who lighted no spark.

The best part of her whole program was the piano lessons. She hurried toward the music school for her nine o'clock lesson the second week of the semester with a lively anticipation.

As she approached the old building on the edge of the campus, she could hear a dozen students practicing. Scales, arpeggios, exercises, the mathematical precision of Bach mingled together on pianos and strings as she walked down the second floor hall toward room 208.

Paula Chester was waiting for her. She had graduated from Overton herself only five years before, and had studied with a famous concert pianist in Germany after that. Both the music and the personality of her teacher moved Jean deeply, and made her want more than she ever had to become a fine musician.

" Scales first, please."

The lesson went on, with Miss Chester pleased with some of Jean's work, critical of other parts, showing her how to correct practice habits.

" What do you plan to do with your music? " she asked, as the bell rang.

" I don't know." Jean collected her music. " Teach, maybe — "

Miss Chester smiled a little. " If you can find your goal before

you go much farther," she said, " you will be more sure of reaching it."

Jean watched her fingers as she ran a chromatic scale smoothly up the piano, fascinated by the effortless ripple of sound.

" I thought I wanted one thing — and after years of effort and heartbreak I found it was something else entirely. That was why I came back here — "

The next pupil knocked on the door, and Paula Chester pulled herself together, slim and erect on the bench.

" If you can study with Dr. Zimmer in your senior year," she said, " it would be worth a great deal to you. But you must work toward that from this year on. Come in! "

The door opened and a plump, eager junior entered, smiling at both of them, and Jean went down the hall and into the wing where her practice room was located. When she left the practice room an hour later, Rose Dorian was coming out of another, violin case in hand. Her dark face was tranquil, almost happy.

" Hi," cried Jean, still stimulated by her lesson and her own practicing, " were you the one who was playing that gorgeous thing a little while ago? " She hummed the remembered melody.

" I was working on it," said Rose. " That's the Beethoven violin concerto. Did you like it? "

" I loved it," said Joan. " My little sister plays violin and I keep wondering if she'll ever play like that. I used to accompany her sometimes, and she sounded good to me."

Rose glanced at her speculatively. " Do you accompany? "

" Oh, yes," said Jean. " I played with the high school concert mistress last year, and I just loved it."

Rose half smiled. " If you can do it, it would help me a lot," she said. " I'm supposed to be playing a solo on a program in

October and nobody has time to practice with me. The last one that tried couldn't even keep time. So if you could — "

"I'd like to try it," Jean said. "Let me work on your accompaniments, and I'll let you know on Friday."

"Let's just start work then," said Rose. She opened the music and pointed out some passages. "Now look — this tremolo should be very soft — other pianists have told me that's hard to do. Then this Bach — but you know how to play Bach! I've got a practice room here at three on Friday — I'll meet you here."

"I was planning to shop on Friday," Jean demurred. "I thought next week would be soon enough."

Rose waved an impatient hand. "You can shop any time," she said. "The program is set for Sunday, October 25 — the Faculty Tea at Houghton House, and we'll need every minute we can find. I'll see you later — I've got gym this period."

She walked away, swinging her violin case as she went, and Jean went to the dormitory in a conflict of annoyance and anticipation. She had an idea that Rose might be hard to work with, and very demanding. And yet Rose really seemed to need her, and Jean hated to say no when anyone asked for help. And it could be a great pleasure to play with an accomplished violinist.

Mail had come during the morning and Jean looked over her letters as she climbed the stairs. One from Scotty she slipped to the bottom of the pile to read last. She tore open an announcement from the Campus Book and Record Shop with an irresistible list of new records enclosed. But she had already bought six records since she had been here. She must stop spending money, she told herself, tearing open the other envelope that looked like an advertisement. The Co-ed Shop advised her that fall sweaters and skirts were being put on sale at savings of up

to fifty per cent, beginning Friday. She needed both sweaters and skirts. But Friday was the day she couldn't shop. She threw away the advertisement in annoyance.

Then she ran a paper cutter under the flap of Scotty's letter. It was about time, he teased her, that she had written. He listed some of the things he was doing at Northern University, he had seen Sally and Bob a couple of times, and he closed: "There was a big dance last week end, but I couldn't find a girl so I decided to save my time and my money and stay home. Have fun, kid, and think of home once in a while. Don't forget all about us here in Sherwood."

She read that page over six times, asking herself if it meant as much as she hoped it did. Then she let it fall on the desk and stared out of the window at the leaves tumbling through the sunny haze, the bright colors of the girls' sweaters, the outline of the hills beyond the town. So he couldn't find a girl.

Her lips curved in a smile. And then she shrugged. That was last week end. He might have a girl by next week end.

But she could ask him to come down for the Home-coming Dance on October 31. She remembered that last date, the way he had kissed her, and she could hardly wait to see him again. She would write in a week or so — no use acting too eager about it.

Down on the walk below the window she saw Melissa, her arms full of books, her yellow short coat thrown about her shoulders over a violet dress, walking with a boy. Jean leaned out to see who it was, but she couldn't recognize him.

After some fifteen minutes she looked out again. Melissa and the boy were talking in front of the main entrance, Melissa sitting on the stone slab at the edge of the steps, looking up at the boy, who stood, one foot up on the slab and his elbow leaning on his knee, looking down at her. Jean watched the boy

turn and saunter away, hands in pockets, head back, whistling a minor air. Thick blond crewcut hair, she saw, big shoulders, a suggestion of independence in his gait.

Melissa entered the room and dropped her books on the bed, and Jean turned expectantly.

"Did you see that cute boy that walked over here with me?"

"I saw him from the window," Jean said. "Who is it this time?"

Melissa looked at her solemnly.

"That was Johnny Herron," she said with emphatic clarity. "He's a junior — majoring in math maybe, he says. Cute and funny. I think he's for me."

"Where did you find him?"

"One of the girls in my French class said he wanted to meet me. She introduced us, and we've been together since eleven o'clock."

"Well — " Jean could find no adequate comment.

Melissa had told her in the confidences of the first week of school that she was looking for a rich husband as well as an education. In the intervening weeks she had dated, drunk sodas, or walked home with a dozen boys, whom she analyzed thoughtfully with Jean as being well-meaning, good company, not serious, or dull. Not one of them showed any signs of wealth.

"So Johnny Herron looks like a possibility," Jean said finally.

"A darned good one," said Melissa smugly. "I'm keeping an eye on him."

"Will he qualify financially?" Jean asked, only half jesting.

Melissa looked sober. "I haven't found out yet. But I will. I exchanged schedules with him and said we ought to keep this casual. I wouldn't want him to think I was interested — yet — "

"Of course not," Jean agreed. "Keep it subtle. You'll get

your man any time you decide to close in."

"That's the point," said Melissa, unperturbed. "I don't want any big emotional crisis until I've made up my mind. This takes planning. He's the first one that's seemed worth working on. In fact, I forgot about money with him."

Jean laughed and wondered suddenly how this would affect her companionship with Melissa. A foretaste of loneliness touched her with a sudden swelling of homesickness. She should find a man of her own. She thought of Scotty. But he had left her free, and he was far away.

Suddenly it became terribly important to be dating, to show these girls who knew her this year for the first time that she could be popular, go out every week end, have a man like everyone else. Preferably an important man, a campus figure. She began to think of the men in her classes, feeling as if her college life had just come into focus.

Studies and music, of course, were the long-range purpose. But the immediate goal was a Big Man on Campus.

[4]

JEAN LOOKED UP AT THE CLOCK IN THE LIBRARY READING ROOM. Nine thirty. She would have to finish this English assignment when she got back to her room, and that meant staying up late again.

She had thought that at college, with classes on alternate days, she would have more time for studying than she had had in high school, and yet she always seemed to be finishing things at the last minute. She asked herself why she hadn't done this work last night, when it had been assigned, but she knew why: Melissa and Dotty had urged her to see a special movie in town with them, and, besides, she had a French assignment delayed from the day before. She felt disorganized, but she told herself things would be different any day now. She just had to get used to everything.

Her glance roamed around the room, taking pleasure in its proportion and modern design. At one end a huge fire burned on a raised hearth, and around the fire a dozen red leather arm chairs were filled with students reading. Small noises accentuated the studious silence of the library: low-toned requests at the desk, catalogue drawers rolling smoothly in and out, cards flipping over, books being closed.

At the next table she saw Phil Stewart, sitting alone. Just

then he raised his head and stared directly at her. She wondered where Pamela was. Rumor said they had fought and parted again this week. Phil bent his head again over his book, and Jean watched him covertly. Studying, he looked like a different man from the night she had first seen him three weeks ago, standing arrogantly with Pamela in the door of the Snack Bar. Different, and even more attractive.

As the clock moved on to nine forty-five students began to collect papers and return books to the desk. Beside Jean, Melissa picked up pens, pencils, papers, and books.

"Are you walking with Johnny?" Jean whispered.

"He hasn't said anything," Melissa replied. "I think I'll go on—"

The two girls moved toward the heavy glass door, and as they passed the last table Johnny Herron reached over and pulled Melissa's coat. She stopped, and Jean went on. But as she was crossing the hall Melissa joined her.

"He won't be finished for ten minutes," she reported. "I told him I couldn't wait. If he wants to walk with me from the library, let him ask for a lib date in the first place."

"It never hurts to let them make an effort to get what they want," Jean agreed. "Did you see Phil Stewart?"

"No!" exclaimed Melissa, as they pushed through the big double doors opening onto a wide stone step. "Was he there? Dotty thinks this breakup is for keeps."

"I thought Pamela seemed annoyed about something when I saw her this afternoon," Jean remembered.

"You watch," Melissa predicted. "She'll be going with some other devoted boy by the end of the week."

Jean watched Pamela the next morning at breakfast entering the dining room at Houghton House. All the dining rooms were located in the women's dormitories, and were coeduca-

tional The seating arrangements were very flexible. The groups of girls and men who ate together varied and changed from meal to meal at tables which seated eight.

Phil had been at Pamela's table for dinner usually, although he never ate breakfast as early as Jean did.

This morning Pamela entered with the group of senior girls who always sat together. Sophisticated girls with beautiful clothes, poise, confidence, they were all members of Key Club, the most important girls' club on campus. They reminded Jean of the Nightingales she had known in high school. Today they were all wearing flannel blazers with matching skirts. They sat down at the table next to Jean. Pamela leaned back languidly and listened to her roommate, Leslie Gates, a thin, dark-haired girl on her right. Brenda Lister, a brown-eyed girl with a center part in her smooth dark hair, stirred her coffee and laughed.

"Who is taking you to the Wranglers' dance?" asked Brenda. "Bill is simply furious because Tony asked me the first week of school."

"Why not tell Tony you've changed your mind?" Pamela inquired.

Brenda smiled tranquilly. "Tony is nice too," she said. "How do I know I won't change back? How do you know you won't? You've been mad at Phil before."

Pamela's face darkened. "It hasn't been like this before. This time it's for keeps."

She broke a sweet roll and nibbled at it as if it had no taste. Jean watched her. The Wranglers' dance was next week end, the first important dance of the year. It would be nice to have a date for it. She sighed and picked up her books for her eight o'clock class, which seemed to be getting earlier all the time.

As she and Melissa approached the dining hall door it burst

open and a rushing figure collided with Jean and knocked her books to the floor.

"I beg your pardon!" He stopped abruptly and stared at her. It was Phil Stewart, and as her eyes met his Jean felt the color rush to her cheeks. She stooped to pick up her notebook. "Say, I'm really sorry. Let me get them." He clutched the books and shoved them into her arms.

Then, realizing that she had not yet spoken, he looked at her again. "You're not going to hold this against me, are you? I didn't realize I was rushing around like that."

Jean shook her head. "Don't give it a thought," she said. "I'm used to being pushed around."

On the point of flight he paused again. Then he grinned. "Have you been eating in this dining hall all the time?"

"If you can call it eating," Jean said. "I'm among those present. Don't let me keep you from your coffee." She moved around him and walked into the hall. Melissa glanced over her shoulder.

"He looked after you," she reported. "Then he looked baffled and went toward the girls. They acted as if they didn't know him."

Jean laughed with a light, heady exhilaration.

"He's cute, Melissa," she said. "But I don't know—"

She sang softly as they came out on the campus, and the whole world seemed to be singing with her. It was one of those bright days in early October when the world is polished and shining and fragrant. A yellow poplar glittered in the warm wind, an elm swayed slightly and rhythmically, a scarlet maple glowed in the sun. The lawns of the campus were cluttered with brown curled leaves, and each breeze scattered leaves through the air like confetti.

"I'll meet you at the Snack Bar at four," Jean told Melissa,

as they separated for their classes.

She sat down and composed herself to listen to Mr. Harley's droning voice, and found that she could not keep her mind on the class. The image of Phil Stewart kept darting through her thoughts. She told herself he was not her type at all. But still he interrupted her concentration.

Rose Dorian was already practicing when Jean arrived at five minutes after three to accompany her.

"Hi," said Rose, playing a scale in perfect octaves. "Let's take the Bach first."

"Say, this is real tricky stuff," said Jean, opening the accompaniment. "I don't know that I'm ready yet — but I spent hours on it."

Rose counted off the opening measures, and Jean missed the beat.

"Look," Rose pointed with her bow, sounding patient. "Take it here, three measures before I come in. One, two, three — "

Jean came in on time and they played it through.

"Well, not bad," said Rose with unflattering surprise. "Now go back to K and let's work on that passage."

The second time Jean's fingers got tangled up, she missed the count once, and she lost the place, which was fatal. Looking annoyed, Rose dropped her bow and said, "K again. *Slow.*"

They took it slowly several times, and Rose nodded at last.

"That will do with more work. Now the Sarasate."

"I didn't work so much on this one," said Jean, feeling apologetic.

"Try it anyway," said Rose.

Jean struggled gallantly to keep up with the violin. But at least three times she lost the count or the place, and they had to stop and get together again. She felt guilty, but there was no reason why she should: she had spent several hours on these

accompaniments on two days' notice, and the music was very difficult.

"If you can work that up before next Wednesday, it will go all right," said Rose. "Now, how about the Beethoven?"

Jean looked at her watch. It was four o'clock, and she was tired with the effort of trying to satisfy an expert violinist without enough practice.

"I've got to go," she said. "I'm meeting somebody at four. Look, Rose, I'll work on these things some more. When did you say the program will be?"

"October 25," said Rose. "Two weeks from Sunday. We really ought to work another hour. Do you *have* to keep your date?"

Jean hesitated, knowing that she and Rose did need more work. And yet, they could do better when she had had more time to practice, and she wanted to meet Melissa.

"Yes, I have to keep the date," she said finally. "When do you want to make it next week?"

"How about Wednesday at three? And two hours on Friday?"

"I'll see you Wednesday, then," said Jean, escaping. She almost ran through the campus hoping that Melissa would still be waiting for her. It was four fifteen when she arrived at the Snack Bar, and her roommate was standing near the door.

"I thought I'd never get here," Jean said breathlessly. "I seem to be accompanying Rose Dorian, and she thinks nothing else is important, but *nothing*. We worked an hour, and she wanted to go on for another hour."

"You haven't missed a thing," Melissa consoled her. "Every booth is taken, and I've been watching for the first empty one. Do you see anyone we can sit with?"

They moved into the room, trying to look as if they knew

exactly where they were going. The big booth in the corner was filled with a group of boys, and Jean saw that Phil Stewart was one of them. Hastily she averted her eyes and was moving past, trying to look as if she hadn't noticed them, when Melissa said: "Jean, the boys want us to sit with them. There's plenty of room here."

She turned back and saw Johnny Herron for the first time. She hadn't realized that he was in the group before: she had seen no one but Phil.

"Why, that would be very nice," she said.

"Take this place," said one of the boys getting up from the end of the padded bench.

"Thank you," said Jean. Then as she realized that she was sitting next to Phil Stewart she added faintly, "Very much." Melissa was sitting on the opposite side of the table, where some shuffling around placed her next to Johnny Herron.

"Now, does everyone know these girls?" said Johnny, grinning happily as he introduced them. "Melissa Girard and Jean Burnaby, roommates at Houghton House, Women of Distinction —"

The girls laughed and he called off the names of the boys — all members of Wranglers', the top men's club on campus. Jean smiled and met the eyes of each man in turn. Then she tried to concentrate on the fountain list, aware of Phil Stewart on her left.

Turning her head a little she asked: "What do I need at this time of day? Knocked down the first thing in the morning, worn to a nub with sprinting around the campus, a hard night's work ahead. Do you recommend Coca Cola, hot fudge sundae, lemonade?"

He grinned into her eyes. "I always recommend coffee."

She considered the suggestion. "I think I'll have limeade."

He grimaced. "Anything to get a little attention. If I'd said limeade, you'd have demanded hot fudge sundae."

"Very likely," she agreed. "What do you do to get attention? Everybody has his little idiosyncrasy."

"I just knock girls down," he told her.

The service was delightfully slow, and the conversation went around the table on wings of laughter. Phil liked the same kind of jokes she did, Jean discovered.

Melissa and Johnny were talking together, almost as if they were alone. Johnny had a nice face, Jean thought: blond and square and open, with a deep cleft in his chin and a very wide grin.

At twenty minutes after five one of the boys announced, "I don't know how the rest of you feel, but I've got things to do."

Melissa and Johnny slid out of the booth to let him go.

"We'll go along," said Johnny, a hand under Melissa's elbow. "Be seeing you." Melissa's head came just to his shoulder, and she winked at Jean, pert and radiant.

As they strolled away, Phil said to Jean, "Come on, and I'll walk you home."

The October dusk was filled with the scent of leaf fires. Down the street beyond the campus the smoke from bonfires curled lazily upward, and beyond the smoke the sky was fading from turquoise into night. The breeze had turned cool, and inside her coat Jean shivered a little.

She glanced up at Phil's hawklike profile, and he was staring into the distance with a dark, thoughtful expression. She wondered if he was thinking about Pamela.

"Tell me about Overton," she said. "I'm so new here."

He told her about professors, campus politics, the newspaper, the Overton *Envoy,* the men's and women's clubs. He advised her about freshman activities and how important it was to get

started in organizations her freshman year.

"They begin rushing next semester," he said. "Key Club is the top, and activity counts heavily. They want girls who do things. And you want to be in Key Club."

"What activities do you recommend?" she asked. "In high school I went in for lots of music work — operetta chorus and so on."

"Did you ever do anything with the newspaper?"

"I planned it, but I never really got there," Jean remembered why she had gotten sidetracked and regretted the waste of time. "I was a sorority girl my junior year, and that seemed to take every minute."

"Were you in a high school sorority?" he looked at her with new respect. "All the girls who come here from high school sororities seem to be pretty successful in the clubs."

She accepted the credit he was giving her for belonging, and said nothing about resigning from the Nightingales.

"Anyway, I always wanted to work on the paper," she said. "How do you get on the *Envoy* staff?"

"I could get you on," he said immediately. "Why don't I see what I could do about music criticism? That's your line, and Fay could use some co-operation."

"Fay?"

"Fay Warner is the music and drama editor," he said. "She says it keeps her busy running back and forth to all the productions. She'd be glad enough to have some help. She tried to get someone else to take it with her, but no senior in the music school had time, and she didn't know any freshmen."

"What is Fay studying?"

He shrugged as if it were unimportant. "Oh, I don't know — minor in piano, I think, major in speech. But that's your spot. How about going over to the journalism building tomorrow

with me and looking around? "

"Fine," Jean accepted promptly. "What time? "

"I'll meet you around ten thirty somewhere. Music Building? O.K."

She looked after him as he walked away, thinking how close she had come to staying with Rose instead of going to the Snack Bar this afternoon, and shivering a little at how nearly she had missed all this — meeting Phil, going to the journalism school with him, working on the paper with him. It seemed incredible that things happened like this. And yet this was the way it ought to be.

She wrote Scotty a long letter that night, but she didn't mention the Home-coming Dance after all.

[5]

"LOOK," SAID MELISSA ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT, "YOU'RE NOT getting ideas about Phil Stewart, are you?"

Jean looked up from the article she was writing for the *Envoy,* reporting the Glee Club concert of the night before. Fay Warner, a small, wiry, sharp-faced senior, had welcomed Jean's co-operation.

"It's all I can do to keep up with the dramatics," she had said. "You can take every musical event. Can I count on that?"

Thrilled, Jean had assured Fay that she could be counted upon, and her first assignment was last night's concert.

"Not me!" she replied to Melissa emphatically. "Why?"

"Oh, I keep hearing things since you went on the *Envoy* staff," said Melissa. "Francie DeLane said this was just the way he began rushing a freshman last year — getting her a job on the paper. But of course Francie is one of Pamela's strongest supporters —"

Jean frowned at a typographical error and began erasing with great care.

"He's attractive, I guess," she said. "I can see how some girls would go for him. But I'm one of the girls he couldn't get — not that there's any suggestion that he wants me!"

Melissa laid down her pencil and shut off the record that was

playing for the fourth time a melancholy ballad of rejected love.

"He has a reputation of being able to go with any girl he chooses," she said. "Only it's hard on the girl, because he always goes back to Pamela."

Jean looked at her with open amusement. "Don't worry about me," she said. "I haven't got a set policy yet, and I might go out with him once or twice, out of curiosity—if he asked me, that is. But he's not my type. I'm concentrating on a cute freshman in my English class, name of Dick Garner, who is even more bored with Harley than I am."

"That's fine," said Melissa, sounding reassured. "I think I'm going to see a lot of Johnny. He and I get along just fine."

"Is he taking you to the Wranglers' dance next Saturday?"

"He is," said Melissa.

The Wranglers' dance opened the social season, and campus talk during the past week had been concerned with who was going with whom to that important event.

"Congratulations," said Jean. "I liked Johnny the first time I saw him."

"So did I," said Melissa.

The telephone rang, down the corridor. "Telephone for Jean Burnaby!"

"Now, who would that be?" Jean wondered aloud. "Maybe this is my bid to the Wranglers' dance. Kind of late, but never give up!"

"Good luck," said Melissa, as Jean ran to the third floor extension.

"Hi, girl reporter. Anyone knocked you down today?"

"Why, Phil! Imagine hearing from you!"

"Didn't I say I was going to call sometime?"

"I don't believe everything I hear, but tell me more."

"Fay says you're doing a great job for her."

" Well, that's optimistic. I haven't finished the first story yet."

" She isn't worried. Neither am I. How about the Wranglers' dance on Saturday night? "

" How about it? " Jean echoed.

" Will you go with me? "

" Well, now," she tried to think. " I'd love to."

" That's good," he said. " I was afraid maybe you were booked up. I didn't meet you soon enough. I'll pick you up at nine, then."

" I'll be looking forward to it."

He rang off and she sat and stared at the telephone, feeling dazed. Then it began to ring again and she let the girl on duty answer it and walked slowly back to her room.

Melissa looked up expectantly as Jean came in. " Big excitement? "

Jean nodded. " Total surprise. Phil Stewart asked me to go to the Wranglers' dance with him."

" No! "

" Yes! "

Melissa doodled thoughtfully over a scrap of paper in geometric designs. " Just don't get in too deep," she said. " Every girl on campus is either wishful or disillusioned about him."

" Indifferent Burnaby, they call me," said Jean. " Don't worry about me, Melissa. I'm curious about his reputation, I think it'll be good for me to go to that dance — but I haven't the slightest interest in going out with him otherwise. It's just a game it could be fun to play. What really worries me is what to wear."

" Dotty is the authority on that," said Melissa, pushing back her chair. " Let's go and consult with her — my goodness, you've only got till Saturday night! "

Many of the girls here at Overton had more clothes than Jean had, although so had many of the girls in high school. But she

had not realized that clothes at Overton would be so sophisticated, and away from home they seemed more important than ever before. Beside Dotty's tiny fur evening cape, neither Jean's short pink summer coat nor her long blue winter coat looked good enough for evening wear.

"This is a real problem, Melissa," she said on Thursday night. "I'd rather stay home than go to that dance looking like a high school girl. What am I going to do?"

"We can borrow something," said Melissa. "You can always find what you need in a house like this."

Jean loathed borrowed clothes. But she had a feeling that for this date clothes were extremely important. Phil was known to choose girls who would lend luster to his reputation for glamour, and, whether she liked him or not, she couldn't bear to be the one who let him down.

The girls went to Dotty Frank's room for another conference.

"Sis Fletcher says Rose has the most fabulous clothes," said Dotty. "I'll bet she'd have a wrap —"

She charged out of the room and rushed down to Sis Fletcher's room on the first floor. Jean and Melissa followed.

"Let me handle this," Dotty whispered, knocking on the door.

Sis opened it. "You sound like a string of ambulances coming through a red light," she observed. "What's the emergency? We're studying in this department," she added warningly.

At one of the student desks Rose Dorian was bent over a book with an expression of profound concentration. She gave no sign of hearing the interruption. Dotty beckoned Jean and Melissa inside and closed the door.

"We've got a problem about the dance Saturday night," she said in a stage whisper, "and we'd like your advice. Have you got a fur evening thing in this room we could borrow?"

"What's the occasion?" Sis glanced at Rose who gave no sign of listening, but whose concentration seemed less intent.

Dotty spoke normally but still quietly.

"Jean here is going to the Wranglers' dance with Phil Stewart, great day in the morning! And wearing an ordinary coat doesn't give her any confidence."

"Phil Stewart! No fooling?" Sis looked at Jean with respect and waved her visitors to sit down on the beds. "I heard that Pamela had given him a final brush-off, but nobody knew who was going with him to the dance. This takes real planning."

"That's what I thought," Dotty agreed. "Your wrap is perfect, Sis—" Sis inclined her head in thanks for the compliment, "but I knew you'd be wearing it yourself. How about your roommate? Is she using her clothes that night?"

"Rose, we need your advice," said Sis, raising her voice a little. "Jean needs a fur wrap for Saturday night's dance—do you plan to use yours?"

Rose looked darkly from one to another of the girls.

"I hate to lend clothes," she said bluntly. "But as long as it's Jean, I don't mind letting her use it this time."

"Well, thank you kindly," said Sis, sounding as if she were trying not to sound sarcastic.

"I don't want to borrow clothes any more than Rose wants to lend them," Jean announced, standing up to leave. "I've just about decided to buy one for myself anyway."

"Sit down and listen to Mother," Dotty pushed her down on the bed again. "You can't buy a fur wrap on an hour's notice—they take more time than that—and loads of money. If you don't wear Rose's wrap, which is one of the most elegant around here—" she bowed in Rose's direction and was rewarded with a reluctant smile, "you can wear one of your coats. Put up or shut up, I say, but don't take any more of our time

when the solution to your problem is sitting right there, sulking over her homework."

Jean laughed in spite of herself, and Rose looked up again, with an expression of enjoying herself more than she would let anyone know.

"Jean, you are welcome to the wrap," she said, more cordially. "Here, try it on and see how you like it."

She went to the closet and brought out the cape in soft moon-gray fur, and thrust it about Jean's shoulders. It felt beautiful, Jean thought wistfully. It looked beautiful. She fastened it at her throat and turned to examine the effect from every side in the mirror.

"It's lovely, Rose," she said. "Are you sure you don't mind letting me wear it? Have I got anything you'd like to borrow?"

Rose shook her head. "Your accompanying my program is a great accommodation for me. Let's call this an exchange of favors. Any time you want to borrow it, let me know."

Jean carried the fur back to her own room and put it on again, turning before the mirror and admiring the lush softness.

"I'm sure I was born to be rich," she declared to Melissa, caressing the fur appreciatively.

"That's what I've said all along," Melissa agreed. "Money is so useful."

Jean removed the fur cape and hung it in the closet. Money, money, money. She had tried to believe all through high school that it was unimportant, as her parents kept telling her. But tonight the old longing for the kind of clothes some girls wore leaped up again. Cashmere sweaters — Rose had told her once that she had twelve. Imported tweed skirts, a fur wrap or coat — was that so much to ask?

Phil was used to going with a girl who had all those things. And if Jean couldn't buy a fur, at least she could get a cashmere

sweater, she told herself.

The thought of spending money and buying clothes soothed her like eating a candy bar when she was hungry. She was going to get herself a cashmere sweater next week, she planned. She had never had one in high school. But this year she had a bank account, and a cashmere was an investment, wasn't it?

Until she fell asleep her thoughts were filled with the absorbing questions of where to buy it, which brand to choose, what color it should be, which skirt should it match?

With the experience of wearing a fine fur, even a borrowed one, a whole new world of clothes seemed to open up for exploration.

6

AT A QUARTER TO NINE ON SATURDAY NIGHT JEAN AND MELISSA stood together before the mirror on the closet door and looked at each other. Melissa's gown was turquoise, which matched her eyes, net over taffeta with a rustling crinoline and silver sandals. Jean wore pale moonlit pink, which gave her slim brown face a glow, with a floating waltz-length skirt.

"You look delicious," said Melissa. "That pink is wonderful with your coloring."

Jean looked at herself critically and could find no flaw. Down the hall a buzzer sounded and someone knocked on their door. "Man waiting for Melissa."

"I'll be right there," called Melissa. She snatched up her fur wrap, checked the contents of her evening bag, turned to Jean. "I'll see you at the dance, Jean. I hope you have a wonderful time."

"I'm sure to," said Jean with a lilt in her voice, "and many happy returns to you!"

Melissa was gone and Jean stood at the window and looked over the campus, dreamy under a harvest moon. It was ten after nine. What if he stood her up? At the idea she began to get angry. Who did Phil Stewart think he was, anyway? And how dared he be so late for a date?

The buzzer sounded again and she started. A voice announced, "Man for Jean Burnaby," and she smiled at her flurry of temper. Everything was all right again. She threw the fur cape around her shoulders, noting how perfect it was with the pink gown, and went downstairs, calm and unhurried.

Phil Stewart rose to his feet as she came in the door of the living room, dark and handsome in his midnight blue formal clothes.

"Hi, Jean," he handed her a square florist's box, "seems like a long time since you've been around. Don't you work at the *Envoy* any more?"

She laughed up at him, untying the ribbon with quick fingers.

"I don't want to brag, but I'm a busy girl. I'll get back on the job next week." She took the lid off the box and lifted out a corsage of white gardenias on a bracelet of white ribbon. "Lovely, Phil. My very favorite flowers. How did you know?"

"They're mine too," he told her. She avoided his glance and concentrated on fitting the flowers back into the box to carry with her.

Other couples were strolling along the walks of the leaf-strewn moonlit campus on the way to the dance, and he held her arm locked in his.

"How did you happen to come to Overton?" he asked.

She told him about Sherwood and Northern University, where her father was a professor; about her sister Sally who was a junior there; about her scholarship and her roommate. He liked Melissa and Johnny, and said, "Maybe we can get together sometime."

Standing at the check desk, Jean found the eyes of other girls curious upon her. A red-headed junior whom Jean had seen in the dining hall said hello to her, and Jean wondered if there was congratulation in her tone. It gave her a heady feeling of suc-

cess, as if she had won the prize in an enormous raffle, to know that Phil Stewart's girl was an object of interest, and tonight she was Phil Stewart's girl.

Dancing with him was like being part of the music itself. She was carried out of herself, into a dream world, where she floated in enchantment. Dancing was serious business for Phil, and he was the most expert dancer she had ever met.

Between dances she touched earth again. When they talked with other students, when she laughed at someone's jokes, when she met Melissa's eyes across the floor, she told herself that Phil was delightful and charming, and the idea of taking him away from a senior was wickedly intriguing. But she was not going to fall for him — not Jean!

They exchanged a dance with a couple she had not met before, and Jean danced with a man named Colly Ferris, who was six feet four and a guard on the football team. He talked about Phil.

"Laziest man I ever knew," he said with a grin. "Perfect talent for getting everyone else to do his work. That's probably what makes him a Big Man on Campus."

Jean laughed up at her tall partner. "Is he so big?" she asked, as if she had never heard it before.

Colly swung her around in a sweeping circle.

"I don't know why, but he is," he averred. "Anyone running for office talks over his campaign with Phil. Anyone wants publicity on the paper, Phil is the boy to see. And of course, people like him."

"What courses is he taking?" Jean asked.

"Journalism mostly — with a minimum of academic requirements. Phil always said newspaper work was his best bet because there was always someone who could write for him, and

the executive line is his talent. And now he's the editor in chief on the *Envoy*."

"What makes him so — so influential?" Jean asked, puzzled.

"You should tell me," Colly said with a wide grin. "He's a personality kid, I guess. Even the teachers like him."

During the intermission Jean saw Pamela Johnson moving across the floor with a blond boy who looked deliriously happy.

"No one should look like that in public," Melissa whispered to her.

Pamela's hair was like a polished silver cap, and her brown eyes were dark and restless. She was wearing white, and she looked like a queen, Jean thought. Pamela's mouth was set in a hard line, and as her eyes swept over Jean she raised her head imperiously. She turned and took her escort to the punch table with the effect of a parade.

"I don't think she likes you," said Melissa, affecting surprise.

"I don't like her, either," said Jean, her eyes snapping. She turned and smiled up at Phil as she took the cup of punch he offered.

"Nothing I wouldn't do for a smile," he told her, putting his arm around her shoulders as he talked to Johnny and Melissa. Jean patted the hand on her shoulder and winked at Johnny across her punch cup. Johnny was a happy-looking youth with an open smile.

"Can I trust you with this wolf while I dance Jean around the floor?" he grinned at Melissa.

"I don't know whether you can or not," Melissa retorted, with a smile that was entirely reassuring. "Try it and see."

Phil turned to Melissa, and Jean went into Johnny's arms. He was a good dancer, but not as good as Phil, and over his shoulder she watched Phil with Melissa.

" What's he got that I haven't got? " Johnny asked plaintively. " Every girl on campus is gone for Phil Stewart. Now, why don't they flock after me like that? "

Jean laughed at him. " It's all illusion," she said. " Imagination or something. I don't think Melissa likes him at all."

" Don't you really? " he sounded so eager that she felt a thrust of sympathy for him. " A guy like Phil makes the competition so tough for the rest of us."

" You don't need to worry," Jean murmured. " You're doing all right."

She hoped Melissa liked him as much as he liked her. Johnny was lighthearted, easygoing, not taking life seriously. If it weren't for Melissa, Jean thought, she could like Johnny herself.

They changed partners for the last dance.

Afterward Jean and Phil walked through the campus to a secluded spot on a bluff overlooking the river and the lights of the town beyond, and sat down on a bench to watch the lights reflected in the river.

" Sometimes it's hard to believe this is my last year," said Phil. " You've got it all ahead, you lucky little girl. Maybe that's why I like freshmen — they make me feel so young."

That made Jean feel young too, and she blushed in spite of herself, glad that the darkness hid her color. He turned and looked at her.

" You're cute when you blush," he said.

" How do you know I'm blushing? "

" Oh, I know these things," he grinned at her. " We're going to see a lot of each other this year, little girl."

She tried to think of a flippant answer, but the only words that came into her mind were, " Can I count on that? " and she didn't dare say them for fear they would sound earnest instead of joking.

"There's the tower clock," she said, as the quarter hour sounded. "Quarter past twelve. We'll just make it."

In the shadows just before they turned into the entrance of Houghton House he stopped and lifted her face with one finger under her chin. Hurrying footsteps sounded on the walk behind them.

Jean twisted away. "I never kiss boys in public," she told him, "unless the moon is full on a fourth Tuesday."

"What's your hurry?" he caught her arm, as the other couple passed them.

"Pardon my manners," she told him, moving toward the door. "I'm always embarassed when my charm is showing."

He looked nonplused and then he laughed.

"You win this round," he told her with a grin. "But the next one is mine."

"If there is a next one," she said demurely. "Phil, it was a wonderful evening, and thanks so much. Good night!"

She threw a laughing glance over her shoulder as the door closed behind her. He was standing there, looking surprised and amused.

Sunday was a gray, sodden rainy day, and Jean was as gay as if it were spring. She thought about Phil most of the day, trying to analyze his attitude and her own, and her conclusion was that he was accustomed to easy conquests, and she was not interested. Still, he could be fun. However, she didn't want to talk about him, and when Melissa asked about her date the night before she said only: "Oh, it was all right. He's a good dancer. Say, I like Johnny! How did things go last night?"

Melissa was filing her fingernails with careful attention.

"I can't decide," she said. "I thought I liked him just fine. And now I'm not so sure how I want to feel about him. . . . What color shall I use on my nails today?"

" Can you plan how you're going to feel and make it stick? " Jean asked, ignoring the manicure question. " And why not Johnny? "

" Well, you know me," said Melissa, trying a rosy tint on one nail and scowling in indecision. " Money can be such fun, and I want it. I don't think Johnny is going to be a money-maker. He's got so many other plans on his mind. Do you think this pink is too-too? "

Jean glanced at the pink polish and shook her head.

" Money isn't the most important thing, Melissa. Johnny would be *fun,* and you wouldn't want some dullard, just because he had a million dollars."

" He wouldn't have to be dull," said Melissa. " Lots of millionaires are charming. . . . I'm going to use red after all."

" Have you got one in mind? "

" That's the trouble," Melissa propped her left hand up to dry. " There's no one right this minute to take the spotlight off Johnny, and I feel as if I had no choice, and then I get so weak — "

" You've got lots of time," Jean said optimistically. " Have fun with Johnny and don't worry. Maybe he'll sweep you off your feet and make up your mind for you."

" That's what I'm afraid of," Melissa brooded. " Fall for romance, and then scrub floors the rest of my life. . . . The rain has stopped. Why don't we go over to the Snack Bar and see who's around? "

Jean shook her head. " Get Dotty to go with you. I've got some work for tomorrow, and I think I'd better study."

At seven twenty the telephone rang.

" Jean? " Phil spoke as if he thought she had been waiting for the call. " Meet me at the Snack Bar in ten minutes? "

He sounded as if he took it for granted that she would be there.

"I'm terribly sorry," Jean's voice was most sincere, "I can't possibly make it tonight."

"Oh, now, come on — you're not that busy!"

"Oh, yes, I am," she assured him. "I'm all confused with this social whirl, and it's going to take me all night to get straightened out."

"I could straighten you out in ten minutes," he said.

"You could not. I need to relax. Maybe next week sometime — or next month."

"Will I see you at the *Envoy* office tomorrow?"

"I have to practice at ten," said Jean reflectively. "Maybe around eleven — who knows?"

"Eleven is no good for me. What about three?"

"Practicing again," she said, remembering Rose's accompaniment.

"Say, what kind of reporter are you?" he demanded. "Don't you do anything but play the piano? Too busy to work?"

"Oh, no," she said sweetly, "I'm working all the time. I'll drop in sometime. Just keep watching."

"Well, say — do I have to make a date to see you? How about studying with me at the library some night?"

She considered that. "That might be a good idea. I ought to go to the library about Thursday."

He groaned, and then he laughed. "O.K., then. Thursday!"

She took her story in to the *Envoy* office on Tuesday at ten o'clock after all, because the journalism office lay between the gymnasium, where she had her nine o'clock class, and the Music Building, where her practice hour was scheduled.

The whole staff greeted her. "Hi, Jean! We were wondering

about that story." "Jean, lamb, I knew I could count on you. The dean of music would have cut my throat if we hadn't covered the first concert of the Overton orchestra." "Can you go to the Cincinnati Orchestra program on Friday here on campus, and write it up?"

She felt needed and important, and she enjoyed every concert.

Phil, as editor in chief, glanced down the paper she handed in.

"Nice work, cub reporter. Now come on and have a cup of coffee with me."

"I haven't got a minute," she began, and then suddenly she wanted a cup of coffee. She felt that she couldn't practice worth a cent without it, and, besides, she was tired of hearing herself say she was busy. "But I'll go anyway. Fifteen-minute break."

"It takes a lot of effort to have a minute with you," he told her, as they walked over to the Snack Bar.

"Why bother?"

"Say, sometimes I think you don't even like me!"

"How would I know?" she demanded. "I don't even know you yet — do I?"

"Some girls can make up their minds a lot faster than you can. But if it's going to take time, let's get to work on it."

He devised so many reasons for keeping her talking to him that morning that the hour was gone before she realized it. She told herself severely that she had no intention of letting that happen again, and for several days she stayed away from the *Envoy* office altogether.

[7]

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED JEAN FOUND PHIL WAITING FOR HER after practicing, or meeting her on the way out of the dining room, where he always ate with a group of boys now, to walk to her one o'clock class with her. He took her to the football game on Saturday, and to the tea dance at the Social Hall afterward. And several times, always unexpectedly, he telephoned.

The campus attention to Phil Stewart's affairs now included Jean, and she found herself getting calls and dates from several other men.

Colly Ferris took her to a picnic and moonlight sing with half a dozen other couples. There was a bright-eyed little blond with a round figure, who lived in one of the other dormitories. Her name was Kitty Dennison, and she said to Jean: "Oh, are you the girl I saw at the dance with Phil Stewart? Isn't he divine?"

"Not divine," Jean assured her, laughing at her. "But interesting. You should try him sometime."

"Wouldn't you mind?" Kitty was wide-eyed and naïve.

"Me? Why should I mind? I've got no plans for Phil."

Cliff Macdonald took her horseback riding. This was an unfamiliar sport for Jean, but Cliff chose her horse carefully and instructed her how to hold the rein and guide the animal, and assured her she was perfectly safe. Once she thought the horse

stumbled, and once he shied and she almost went over his head. But the ride ended without mishap, and, stiff and sore, she felt it had been " an experience " at least. But she thought she would not try it again.

Dick Garner, a hopeful, round-cheeked, joking freshman in her English class, who had taken her out a couple of other times, invited her to go on a bike hike with another couple. They rented bikes on a Saturday afternoon and rode for miles through country roads away from the campus to a picnic spot where the boys built a fire and they cooked steaks in the crisp early October twilight.

Phil called her the next day, to ask where she had been on Saturday.

" I tried to get you all afternoon," he said. " I thought we could play some golf."

" I went on a bike hike and picnic," she said.

" Reminds me of my kindergarten days," he said. " It makes me stiff to think of it now."

" I loved it," said Jean. " I hope we can do it again."

He ignored that. " Did I tell you I'm taking you to the Homecoming Dance on the thirty-first? "

" No. Are you? It's a good thing you told me, because somebody else mentioned it, just yesterday."

" You didn't say yes to *him,* did you? "

" Not that time, but I was planning to."

" Who was it? "

" I don't think I'm going to tell you. Isn't it more interesting to have your competition mysterious? "

" I'd just as soon not have any competition," he said. " Just save all your open dates for me."

" That's isn't the way I play the game," she said. " First call, first date."

"I'll be around tonight about seven," he said promptly. "We'll have to have an understanding about this."

She was pleased about the Home-coming Dance, but she was not going to admit it, even to herself. She knew that Phil had rushed other freshmen in other years. But when Melissa tried to tell her this was just like all his other freshmen affairs, Jean denied it.

"The other girls all fell for him," she said. "This little freshman isn't going to. The only difference between him and the other boys I have fun with is that nobody dances like Phil."

Nobody else had the prestige that Phil had, either. She tried not to think of that, feeling that it was unworthy to consider how important a boy might be on campus. But she could not help a sense of gratification that a boy who was reputed hard to get was interested in her.

"You're seeing a lot of him," Melissa warned her, "and Pamela doesn't like it at all."

Jean shrugged. "Let Pamela worry," she said flippantly. "I'm not going to!"

Pamela roomed with Leslie Gates in the wing on the opposite side of the central stairway. Part of her senior office was to serve as confidante and "big sister" to any freshmen girls who wanted advice from an upperclassman. And while Pamela was not the kind of girl Jean could imagine confiding in, she had made some friends among the freshmen, and one of her most devoted admirers was Francie DeLane, who lived across the hall from Jean.

Francie had been friendly enough with Jean and Melissa the first few weeks. But after Jean's appearance at the Wranglers' dance Francie had cooled perceptibly toward her. And as the weeks went by and campus gossip focused on Jean and Phil, Francie had been heard to remark more than once that fresh-

men who complained about the house rules always turned out to be troublemakers.

When that remark came to Jean's ears, she had a sinking feeling as if she had stepped on quicksand. She knew she had talked too much about the rules. But she had supposed that all the girls felt alike about them, and that certainly no freshman would betray another. Nor had she supposed up till then that senior-elected officers in the position of house counselors could be vindictive. Like a chill wind, the realization hit her that Pamela could be.

"Well, let her," she said, after she had become accustomed to the idea that she had an enemy. "I didn't ask Phil to call me up and take me out—in fact, I'm discouraging him all the time."

"I can imagine," said Melissa skeptically.

Jean laughed. "He almost gave up when I told him I was practicing with Rose every day this week for the program on Sunday."

Her rehearsals with Rose had been a useful excuse for being occupied just now. But Jean found Rose's demands arduous, and she looked forward to getting through the program and having no more accompaniments to polish to Rose's critical perfection.

The program on Sunday, October 25, went very well indeed, and Jean enjoyed it more than she had anticipated. Standing near the tea table and selecting a couple of dainty sandwiches, exhilarated with success, she was glad that Rose didn't choose that moment to ask her to accompany another program. She might have said yes.

The tea was a delightful occasion. The faculty, as guests, were cordial, interesting people. Even Mr. Harley seemed to have a human kind of interest in people, outside of class. The girls, as

hostesses, were gay and charming. The food was delicious. Mrs. Buxton displayed great pride and astonishment in the social proficiency of her girls, and after the program she said to Jean and Rose, "My, I had no idea we had such talent in Houghton House this year!"

"What business has she to be surprised?" Rose muttered, putting her violin away with great care. Jean laughed. Even Mrs. Buxton could not bother her today. She was through practicing with Rose — and next week end was Home-coming.

She went to the Home-coming Parade on Friday night with Melissa and Dotty and Sis Fletcher. They watched the crowd for boys they knew almost as much as they watched the floats, and before the parade had ended, Dick Garner and Colly Ferris and Johnny Herron joined them.

Jean wondered, just out of curiosity, she told herself, if Phil were in the crowd with Pamela. But Pamela rode by, queenly and shivering in evening dress atop the Key Club float, and Jean remembered that Phil's parents were coming down for the week end, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Home-coming since their own graduation from Overton.

"Where's your roommate?" she asked Dotty. "I thought she'd surely be around for the parade."

Dotty drew down her mouth in an expression that indicated that Alice was a hopeless case.

"Whenever I feel strong enough, I try to do something for poor Alice," she said, waving vigorously at a friend on a float. "I told her if she'd come to the parade with me I'd buy her a hot chocolate drink afterward. Simple as she is, I don't like her to think she isn't wanted. But she said she guessed she'd go home to Mamma again — lucky for me!"

"Maybe she can't stand your Dali designs more than just so long without a break," said Jean. "They even give me night-

mares after two hours."

"Maybe so," agreed Dotty. "I offered to put up a couple of painless little Renoir ballet dancers, if she would enjoy them better. Know what she said? She said: 'I don't really care, thanks. I never look at pictures.'" Jean burst out laughing, and Dotty rolled her eyes with an expression of hopelessness.

The float of Kittredge Club went past and Dotty waved wildly again.

"I don't see how those girls can stand these temperatures in evening gowns," Jean remarked. "They look absolutely blue."

"They *like* to be cold," said Sis Fletcher, over her shoulder. "Makes them feel heroic."

They followed the last float toward the bonfire blazing in the campus meadow.

After the bonfire the girls went back to the house, where a reception had been planned for ten o'clock for the parents of the girls in the house who had come down for the week end. It was a late hour for a party, but there had been no other time left in the week end for it, the schedule of affairs was so full.

Jean was becoming accustomed to late party hours at the house. There were so many things to celebrate: one of the seniors became engaged, and immediately her roommate asked in a dozen girls on the floor to take proper notice of the occasion. That party had gone on until midnight on a Wednesday. Then the next week one of the freshmen announced that her father had been called to Washington to take a high Government post, and that called for recognition, with a party in her room until twelve thirty.

Although the girls had to be in the house by ten, there was no rule about lights out, and since Mrs. Buxton was frequently included in the celebrations as a courtesy and also a strategy, she never objected to them. It seemed to Jean like a sophisticated

Bohemian kind of existence, and she loved every minute of it. But the eight o'clock classes were becoming more and more arduous.

Fortunately classes had been dismissed for the Home-coming week end, and Jean crawled groggily out of bed at ten the next morning, feeling that she would never catch up with her sleep. There was a special luncheon before the game, just because it was Home-coming, and all the girls went to the game together.

Down in front of the stands the girl cheerleaders in heavy, turtle-necked white sweaters, with a huge green O, and kilt-length green pleated skirts besought the crowd to cheer for the team. They flung their arms out, pulled them slowly together, pulling the cheers with them, and leaped gracefully in the air with a final, long-drawn "*Yeah!*" Colly Ferris ran the length of the field for the tying touchdown and then kicked the winning point. Jean yelled until her throat was sore.

By the time the game was won, with a score of 7 to 6, she felt exhausted, excited, and stimulated all at the same time. She went with the girls on the round of receptions and tea dances at the different dorms, and ate enough on the way around so that she did not return to Houghton House until it was time to dress for the dance in the evening.

She relaxed in a hot tub for a long time, and managed to protract her dressing until long after Phil arrived. Never again would she wait for him, she promised herself.

Phil looked impatient when she came downstairs, serene and unhurried.

"Am I late?" she asked innocently. "I'm so sorry — I didn't intend to be as late as this."

"Someday I won't wait for you," he grumbled.

She laughed at him, as she opened the flower box and took out a brown orchid.

"Someday you won't have to," she assured him. "You're getting earlier all the time, and it might be catching."

"Minx," he said, laying Rose's fur cape about her shoulders, with affectionate pressure.

"Are your folks staying over tomorrow?" she asked, as they went down the steps.

"They took the seven o'clock train home tonight," said Phil. "They had a good time, I guess. Holy smokes, class of 1928! That's a long time back."

They talked about the next twenty-five years, as they walked across campus, and what they were going to do with their lives. Phil planned to go into his father's real estate firm in Cincinnati.

"He's been counting for years on having his son in the business," he said. "After I get through with the Army hitch."

Above the hills the enormous moon was golden as a pumpkin and lighted the earth with a pale brillance the color of dreams. Phil stopped and gave Jean an unexpected kiss in the shadow of an old oak tree.

"That's for good luck," he whispered.

She floated through the evening on a bubble of happiness. This was the night when everything was perfect, the music, the weather, her dress, her date. They exchanged dances with Colly and Dick, at their demands, and Jean noticed that Phil was annoyed, although he tried to hide it.

After the dance they went in to the Sweet Shop in town for food. The place was filled with students who greeted Phil and smiled at Jean. She told Phil she might go home with Melissa for Thanksgiving week end.

"Quilby is just over the line from Cincinnati," he said, teasingly. "Why don't you come to the big town while you're there?"

"Who knows?" Jean said. "I might, at that. But of course

you're going to be busy." She laughed at him, daring him to deny it.

"So I am," he agreed. "You must be telepathic. But we ought to have another date before then. How about bowling with me next Saturday afternoon?"

She shook her head. "I'd like to bowl, Phil, but I'm going to Melissa's play that afternoon. She's got the lead, and of course I have to see it."

"How nice of you to invite me to go with you!" he said. "Should I accept or not?"

"Better not," she advised him. "This is a hen party."

He threw up his hands in mock despair. "Never did I see a girl so hard to get," he complained. "Do you plan it that way?"

"It seems like a good idea."

"Any minute now," he warned her, "my interest is going to catch fire—"

"That must be something to watch," she told him. "When it happens, let me know, will you?"

She was having more fun with Phil than she had anticipated, Jean thought, as she undressed for bed that night, watching the orange moon fade as it sank behind the trees. Romance could be delightful as long as you didn't take it seriously. And she had no intention of being serious about Phil.

It was exciting to have him pursue her, to know that she was taking him from a senior, to feel that one of the most important men on campus was rushing her, and yet she didn't care.

Just so it didn't build up into anything, a warning sounded in the back of her thoughts. Just so her emotions didn't get involved.

She laughed at the man in the moon. Not a chance, she told him. Not a chance.

[8]

AFTER HOME-COMING EVERYBODY SUDDENLY STOPPED FOOLING around and settled down to study for the midsemester examinations, which were scheduled for the second week in November. Key Club announced that their turnabout dance would be held November 14, at the close of examination week, with tickets going on sale beginning the seventh.

Jean sat in Mr. Harley's English class and leaned her head on her hand, struggling to keep her eyes open. In spite of his dull teaching he was reputed to be the hardest teacher in the college when it came to grading examinations. He told the class that during this week he would review everything they had covered to date, and Jean flipped back through her notes to make sure she had left nothing out. She could hardly see the page, and she had a dreadful feeling that if she let herself relax for even a moment she would go to sleep right there in class.

Paragraph structure, she read with an effort, expository methods, description, narrative style. Examples of each type of writing. She yawned deeply and covered her mouth, hoping no one had noticed.

The week wore on and Jean studied more intensively than at any time in the semester, while an ugly realization that she had not worked hard enough began to take form. M. LeMaire, after

letting her think that French was easy, seemed to expect more information now than she had.

The girls were talking about the Key Club turnabout, anticipating a party after exams were over, but Jean couldn't look so far ahead. The tickets were three dollars and a half, and she thought she had better save her money.

On Thursday night Pamela and her friends were talking intently at their table in the dining room, looking occasionally toward Jean, who smiled at them brightly. At the end of the meal Pamela swept toward the door, poised and superior, her friends about her.

"Have you decided about the Key Club dance on the fourteenth?" Brenda asked Pamela with artful carelessness as they passed Jean's table.

"Oh, didn't I tell you? I'm taking Phil."

Jean stirred her coffee and lifted the cup to her lips, keeping her eyes down. The group of girls stopped to finish their conversation where they stood.

"I thought you were still mad at him," said Pauline Soames, sounding as if she were picking up a cue.

"Off again, on again," said Pamela. "I was mad at him a couple of weeks ago, but we got over it."

Jean could feel their eyes resting upon her as they moved on. She set down her cup and turned to Melissa with bright animation.

"Are you going to that dance?"

"I think I'll take Johnny."

"I haven't decided whether I'll go or not."

They lingered a few more minutes over their coffee, and Jean decided to join a group of girls in a game of bridge for an hour before she went back to studying. The girls were more interested in the Key Club turnabout than the game, and discussed in de-

tail the problems of whom to take, what to wear, who would be going. Jean had thought she was not going. Now she wasn't so sure. She drew out her king, wondering if she could finesse an ace, and tossed it on the trick.

Her opponent played the ace. "I love the way you throw down your cards, Jean — like a high-toned gambler or something."

Jean's partner grinned. "I never know whether Jean knows what she's doing, or whether she's bluffing all the way."

"Neither do I," said Jean serenely. "If you make your decisions with a confident air, you always look as if you know what you're doing, I learned last summer, and it seems to work."

"Are you going to the turnabout?" inquired Jean's partner, fiddling with the corner of a card she could not decide whether or not to play. "I'd just about decided to ask Greg, and then Kay said she was taking him."

"I don't know whether I'll go or not," said Jean.

"You mean Phil is already dated?"

"Is he?" said Jean. "I wouldn't know — I didn't ask him."

The question posed a challenge. She could not let the girls think she was going to stay home because she couldn't take Phil.

"I'll post a bulletin when I decide what I'm going to do," she advised her eager audience, as the game ended at eight and they all scattered to study. I'd better be very, very busy for the next couple of weeks, she thought, as she went upstairs.

She bought a ticket for the dance and asked Dick Garner to go with her. Then she thought about her wardrobe again, a recurring question for every major occasion. It seemed very important that she should look her best for this dance, not so much for her own date, as for the other girls with their dates who would see her there.

She could borrow Rose's fur again. But, she thought rebelliously, if she couldn't afford a fur of her own she was entitled to smaller luxuries. A crinoline, a lavish, rustling, frilly crinoline, would make her formal feel like a new dress. She would shop for one tomorrow.

The crinolines the next afternoon were more alluring than she had remembered. There were dozens at $5.95, but the irresistible one that she had to have was $12.95. Pamela had several crinolines and frequently wore three at a time. Jean bought the one she wanted and assured herself that it was worth the money to have that sensation of confidence in your clothes.

On the wave of exhilaration that attended this purchase she bought a cashmere sweater in muted green that did things for her eyes, and an imported tweed skirt to go with it. The cashmere would be the backbone of her wardrobe for her next three years at college, she told herself.

When she got home and straightened out her checkbook, she was amazed and uneasy at the way her account had dwindled. But clothes were so much more important down here than at home. She would save money by going home with Melissa for Thanksgiving, instead of going to Sherwood, and she wouldn't need to buy another thing until next semester.

And to make up for something, she could not quite decide what, she studied the rest of the week more intensively than usual.

Friday night Cliff Macdonald asked her to go to a movie.

"There's a swell murder mystery at the Overton Playhouse — why don't we take an evening off and forget this grind?"

"Why not?" Jean agreed. "Anything to fill the time until the execution."

He wasn't sure whether he was supposed to smile at that or not.

"Yeah," he said uncertainly.

It was a good movie anyway, and she thanked him for the evening with genuine sincerity. But there was no use encouraging Cliff. After Phil his personality was very tepid.

She didn't know whether she would ever go out again with Phil, now that he was going with Pamela again, and in spite of herself she thought of him with some regret. It had been fun while it lasted, and naturally she would be sorry to have it ended.

Then for a week she wrote midsemester exams, worried about her grades, and tried desperately to learn all the things she seemed to have missed. She got several B's, and resolved to get down to work for the rest of the semester.

Melissa came into their room the night before the Key Club dance, her eyes snapping with fury.

"Who's done you wrong?" Jean wanted to know.

"Ha!" Melissa exploded. "I heard some gossip about you and Phil that needs taking care of."

"What do you mean?"

"Dotty told me that one of the Key Club girls told her that it's all over the campus that Phil had turned you down for the Key Club dance."

"But I didn't ever ask him!" Jean cried.

"I know you didn't. It's typical of the way Pamela operates. I'll fix her wagon, though. You just back me up, whatever I say."

Francie DeLane was in the bathroom that night with two Key Club sophomores when Jean and Melissa came in. She looked at Jean belligerently and muttered something to her friends about some freshmen not catching on to campus customs very quickly. Jean ignored her.

She squeezed tooth paste on her brush and leaned over one

of the washbowls, as Melissa said conversationally, "I always said if a guy really belonged to a girl she didn't have to worry about competition."

Francie's head went up at the scent of battle.

"Of course," she said to her friends, in a slightly louder tone, "Pamela has had to cope with this business right along. Girls simply throw themselves at Phil, and the poor guy can't get rid of them."

Jean raised her head, her mouth full of tooth paste, and looked at Francie, outraged. Francie stared back in open challenge. Cheeks flushed, Jean bent over the washbowl again.

"The *poor* boy," cooed Melissa. "He probably needs help. Pamela ought to hang a sign on him, 'This man belongs to me.' What's the matter with her? Can't she hold her man?"

Francie glared at Melissa. "You don't need to waste any sympathy on Pamela," she said. "Save it for your roommate."

Jean rinsed out her mouth and stood up, ready to support Melissa.

"Tell me," Melissa said sweetly, "is it true that Pamela finally badgered Phil into going to the Key Club dance with her, when he was trying to hold out for someone else?"

There was a deadly silence. Jean stole a glance at Francie, who was livid and too much involved with Melissa now to notice Jean.

"No!" she snapped. "I mean, yes. I mean, she's going with Phil, but—"

"I *wonder* how she persuaded him to go with her," purred Melissa. "*I* heard he turned her down three times."

Jean felt a convulsive giggle rising in her throat. Francie's baffled gaze shifted to Jean.

"Why, Melissa," Jean said reproachfully, "how you talk! You know *I* never planned to take Phil to that dance — it's been

Dick Garner all along."

"You're both out of your heads," Francie snapped.

"It must have been two other girls," Melissa agreed. "But I certainly heard that Pam followed him from one end of the campus to the other, and he kept turning her down until he couldn't find any more excuses. Lucky for Phil that she's taking him, after all, or he wouldn't get there — would he?"

With a vindictive snarl, Francie turned on her heel and threw the door open. Unfortunately for her intention it closed softly and slowly on a vacuum catch. Jean and Melissa waited for it to close and gave way to giggles.

"I don't think Pamela will enjoy that dance," Melissa said with satisfaction. "Francie could never keep such ugly rumors to herself."

The next morning Jean found a note in her mailbox from Rose.

"I've got two tickets for the Cincinnati Symphony on Sunday afternoon. Gieseking playing the 'Emperor' — can you go with me?"

Jean accepted with pleasure. This would fill Sunday afternoon, and that would probably be a good thing.

Saturday afternoon, before the dance, she went to the football game with the girls, and watched Overton lose the last game of the season by a score of 21 to 0.

"How gruesome!" said Dotty, as they climbed down the bleachers after the game. "My feet are simply frozen, my throat is raw, and all this for a gloomy defeat. Let's go in town and try to forget for a couple of hours."

They ate dinner in town, which cost Jean two dollars. She shouldn't spend so much money as she did, she thought futilely, as they walked back to the campus to dress for the dance. But times like this it seemed imperative to go along with the girls.

How could she say: " I just can't afford it, girls. I'll have to eat in the dining room "?

There was no answer, except to devise some way to earn money — and where would she find the time for that? She put the whole problem out of her mind and thought about the crinoline she was about to wear, which made her feel like a successful glamour girl.

She and Dick walked to the dance with Melissa and Johnny, and Jean tried not to notice the feeling of going through motions that meant nothing.

She had arranged to trade dances with Melissa and Dotty and Sis, and Dick protested.

" I want to dance with the girl that brung me," he complained only half jokingly.

" But I thought you'd like variety," she pretended surprise. " I thought all men liked variety — are you different? "

" Baby, why should I want variety when I've got you? "

He was beginning to get serious, she thought, dancing away with Johnny Herron, and that she was through with. Last year when Jeff had become too serious she had not known how to handle it, and they had both been unhappy. But this year she was older — she knew what she was doing. She was going to tease Dick along, laugh him out of it tonight, and after this she was not going out with him again.

Across the floor Phil was dancing with Pamela, and everyone, of course, was very much interested in what could be read on their faces.

" Pamela never trades dances when she's with Phil," murmured Sis, as they stood together between dances.

" How dull! " said Jean, for Dick's benefit. " I think half the fun of a dance is different partners. Jim, don't we have the next? "

She held out her hand to Sis's tall date, who grinned as he took it.

"You know, you're getting a name on this campus as the first freshman Phil ever dated who didn't fall for him," he told her.

She raised her eyebrows in mock astonishment. "How distinguished!" she drawled. "Am I missing something?"

He laughed aloud. "Nothing but trouble," he assured her. "Having fun?"

"All I can cope with," she told him.

In spite of her words the evening seemed a little flat without a dance with Phil. She laughed and teased and ignored the letdown feeling.

But when she was in her room again, she began to wonder where it was all leading to. Thank goodness for the concert tomorrow. She must keep herself too busy to think.

Walking with Rose toward the interurban train that would take them in to Cincinnati, the next day, Jean began to feel some excitement about hearing Gieseking, with a belated realization that she should have been excited about the pianist from the beginning.

"I'm hoping we can work together again," Rose said. "I'm giving a solo recital in the spring, and I'd like to have you for an accompanist, if you will."

"Let me see how things go after Christmas," Jean temporized. She was embarrassed at having Rose ask her at a time when Rose was taking her to a concert. It made a delicate situation, when she was not yet sure how much more work she would do with Rose. "You play so well, Rose, but time is awfully crowded—"

Rose's face shadowed. "That's how it is with all the piano students. What are they playing piano for, if they can never find time to accompany? What will you do with your music?"

Jean was ashamed of her reluctance, and yet not ready to commit herself. "I suppose I'll take a degree in music education. I never intended to be a soloist, if that's what you mean."

"No ambition, that's the trouble with all of them," grumbled Rose. "Teach school, teach music to millions of other students so they can teach — what does it all add up to?"

Jean glanced at Rose, arrested by the emotion in her exclamation.

"What are you going to do? Compete with Heifetz?"

Rose waved an impatient hand. "Naturally not. One knows one's limitations, if one has any sense at all. But there is a need for music, for fun, maybe, for listening, maybe. You don't have to be a big star to give someone something he will enjoy. These teachers — do they ever play for someone to listen to? No! They teach and teach and teach — and do their pupils ever play except for a graduation recital?"

Jean listened, with a dawning recognition of the truth.

"I'm going to be a soloist," Rose went on aggressively, "certainly! I shall play, always. I'll have a trio or a quartet, and we'll play for our friends, for ourselves, for audiences that want to hear music in between the days they can hear Heifetz. I'll play with a symphony, a big one, a little one, what does it matter? And if I have to teach to make a living, I'll teach. But first I'll play. And I'll always need an accompanist."

Jean felt a touch of the same inspiration that her teacher gave her. This was worth doing, what Rose wanted to do: to make music all her life.

"You've got something, Rose," she said impulsively. "There ought to be a lot of time after Thanksgiving week end — we'll get together again after that."

The seats Rose had bought were excellent, in the center of the first row of the balcony. Jean glanced at the audience, but

there was no time to watch them: the orchestra was on the stage as the girls took their places, and she had barely enough time to discover from her program that the first number would be the *Rienzi* Overture before the lights were dimmed.

Watching the orchestra carried her back to the summer concerts she had heard with Scotty — was it only four months ago? They had listened to the *Rienzi* on that first date, graduation night.

It had been weeks now since she had heard from him; she had not answered his letter of mid-October, she remembered with a pang of conscience. Scotty seemed very close in the dimness of the concert hall listening to the *Rienzi* Overture again. For a moment he was more alive in her mind than Phil, and for that moment she missed him achingly. He loved music too, and especially symphony orchestra. She would write him tonight, she determined.

Gieseking walked across the stage for the "Emperor Concerto" and the audience applauded with spontaneous excitement. He sat down at the piano and nodded to the conductor to begin, and Jean sat forward, spellbound with the power and melody of the well-known number.

At the close of the concerto the audience cheered and whistled their excitement. The artist bowed, looking a little surprised at their emotion, and left the stage. The lights went up for the intermission.

"Do you want to go out for the intermission?" Rose asked.

"I don't think so," said Jean. "I'd like a chance to read the program."

In the aisles people were streaming out to the lobby. The girls leaned forward to watch those who stayed behind.

"Isn't that Miss Chester down there?" Rose asked. "About ten rows back from the front on the right?"

Jean looked where Rose was pointing and nodded.

" She's a wonderful teacher," said Jean. " I wonder why she didn't go on with the concert stage. She's got so much personality and everything it takes."

" If she'd been willing to accompany, she could have had all the engagements she wanted," remarked Rose.

Jean grinned at her, her good humor restored. " Maybe she likes to teach," she said. " You instrumentalists have a hard time, don't you? "

" I won't have any trouble if you stay with me," Rose said, with a half-smile. " Next time I'll take you to hear a solo violin recital with piano and give you an idea of the possibilities."

" I don't know why anyone plays an instrument that can't get along by itself," Jean teased.

" Ah, but the life of music is in ensemble playing," said Rose didactically. " A piano alone can't compare."

" Don't make me feel so inferior," Jean begged. She acknowledged the truth of Rose's statement in her own experience, but not for anything would she give Rose the satisfaction of agreeing with her.

[9]

WHEN PHIL CALLED ON TUESDAY NIGHT BEFORE THE THANKSGIVING holidays, Jean was dismayed at the shock of pleasure she felt.

"It's been an awful long time since I've seen you," he said. "Where've you been all these days?"

"Here and there," Jean told him. "Keeping busy."

"Come on and take a walk," he suggested. "I need strength for studying tonight. Couldn't you use a cup of coffee?"

They walked over to the Snack Bar, where students were fortifying themselves against the long night's work.

"You know," Phil leaned back in his chair and stared at Jean from under dark brows, "you're refreshing. You don't try to tie strings on a man."

"No," Jean stirred her coffee, pleased and determined not to show it. "Live and let live, I figure. Come and go, win or lose. Why? Is that unusual?"

"Some girls don't operate that way," he remarked. "I missed you at the *Envoy* office. You're not letting the old school paper down, are you?"

She feigned surprise, although she had gone there, if at all, during hours when she knew he would be absent.

"I wondered where you were," she said innocently. "I've

been taking assignments. Didn't you see my write-up of Gieseking?"

"I thought you checked in at ten," he said. "That's when I'm there."

"I was missing too many practice hours," she told him. "I just drop in when it's convenient."

He looked aggrieved, and she laughed at him. "You know where you can find me when you want to see me," she told him. She looked into the distance with anticipation. "By this time tomorrow I'll be in Quilby with Melissa, oh joy! It's going to be good to be away from the campus for a while. And for better, for worse, midsemesters are behind."

"My folks check off every vacation these days as the last one for me," he said with a wry grin. "Your last summer at home, they kept telling me. Your last Thanksgiving dinner — you'd think I was condemned to execution, instead of just going into the Army when I graduate."

"How long in the Army — two years?"

He nodded. "You'll be a senior by the time I'm out. I'll come back and see you graduate."

"I'll watch for you," she promised. "With my little rolled-up diploma I'll wave to you." Senior year seemed very far away.

They walked across the frozen campus, shivering in an east wind. No snow had fallen yet, and the campus was barren and hard with frost. In the warm circle of his arm she was uneasy. It was a good thing she was going home with Melissa tomorrow, she thought, when she told him good-night.

The Girard home in Quilby was a red-brick colonial house, large and imposing. But the atmosphere Jean recognized: the house was filled like her own with the activities and business and conflicting demands of four dynamic persons.

Mrs. Girard was thin and dark, with an eager, lively expres-

sion. She was state president of the Woman's Republican Club of Ohio, and she had three important meetings on her calendar for Friday after Thanksgiving.

Mr. Girard was a probate attorney, portly and white-haired.

" He's been white as long as I can remember," Melissa had told Jean before they arrived. " Actually he's no older than most fathers, but he looks very distinguished." She divulged fascinating facts about wills and testaments and the handling of money.

Melissa's sister, Cynthia, whom Melissa called Cindy, reminded Jean of Betsy. " We ought to get the kids together sometime," said Melissa. " They'd probably like each other."

The week end went quickly. Melissa showed Jean around the small suburb of Cincinnati on Wednesday night, and they spent Thursday helping Mrs. Girard with the Thanksgiving dinner, for which two sets of grandparents came. The adults were so busy with their reminiscences that Jean was happy to escape to the kitchen with Melissa and Cindy and occupy herself with dishing up the lavish dinner and cleaning up afterward.

Melissa invited a crowd of her Quilby friends in for Friday night, and she and Jean went to a party on Saturday night. The young people reminded Jean of her friends in Sherwood, and there was a great deal of jesting, laughter, and music.

Jean wrote a long, chatty letter to Scotty, mentioning that she had a problem she ought to talk over with him. When she read her letter over, she decided to say nothing about a problem, and she tore it up and began over. She mentioned Phil as a campus celebrity who was giving her a rush now and again, and felt that she was accurately reporting the affair as a casual, lighthearted, fun-making diversion.

The thing that disturbed her most was her feeling that she did not care about Scotty the way she had last summer. Even that she could not be sure about. She hoped Christmas vacation

would straighten everything out.

" Your boy at home sounds awfully good to me," Melissa told Jean. " Just don't let Phil unsettle anything there."

" Time will tell," said Jean lightly. " I don't expect to see much of Phil when I get back, if at all."

He called her Sunday night, and her caution was swept away on a wave of delight.

" What did you do with your holiday? " she asked.

" I missed you," he told her, and she laughed at him. But she wondered whether he meant it, or whether it was just a line.

" I imagine Pamela took up a lot of your time," she teased. " I was having a wonderful time myself."

" Comme ci, comme ça," he said. " I didn't play solitaire."

" Out of sight, out of mind," she said. " I was busy too. And I still am. Term papers are due now—I've got to get back to my studying."

" Early to bed and early to rise," he gibed, " and what good does it do to be healthy and wise? Keep next Saturday for me, will you? "

The weather was cold, with no trace of snow. The campus was stripped and open, with the shrubbery denuded of leaves, the skeletons of trees and bushes sketchy black crayon drawings. The lawns were brown and beaten down under the feet of the students, and raw gusts of wind raised swirls of dust in the air.

The campus was strung with lights for the Christmas season. The music department worked overtime on programs, and Jean found every day crowded with practice for the choral program, special music for the chapel services, the Christmas festival in which the whole college took part, and to which the townspeople were invited. With only two weeks left until Christmas vacation she was running out of minutes.

All her Christmas shopping was still ahead of her, and Phil

seemed to be at her elbow most of the time. She asked him once if he would like to go Christmas shopping that afternoon. But it was a mistake. She wanted to listen to records and buy one for Melissa, and he scoffed at all her selections, persuading her finally to buy a popular album that she had not intended to get. And then, not daring to exchange it, she kept it for herself and got Melissa another when she went in to town alone. She bought a Michael Rabin recording for Rose at the same time.

She finally decided, in the last week, that she had better give Phil a Christmas present. Melissa was giving Johnny Herron Argyle socks she had been knitting for weeks, and a cashmere sweater.

"Give him golf balls," Melissa suggested. "He's mad about golf, isn't he?"

Jean picked out the brand Melissa recommended after consultation with Johnny and discovered to her horror that they cost a dollar and a half apiece. She had to revise her plan of giving him a dozen, but she dared not give fewer than six.

By that time her checking account was dangerously low, and she thought she had better put all her family Christmas presents on charge accounts here in Overton. When she had bought her round trip ticket home, she had six dollars and forty-seven cents left. She wondered where all the money could have gone. Every expenditure had been unavoidable.

There was no time to practice with Rose in that hectic fortnight, and Rose looked annoyed, as she always did when Jean implied that other things than music filled her time.

"I want to be able to count on you," she said. "Let's put it on a professional basis. I'll pay two dollars an hour for practicing, and ten dollars for the performance. But you'll have to give me all the time I want."

This was better pay than clerking or baby-sitting, and Jean

needed the money badly.

"I'll buy it," she said, wishing there were time to earn some of that money before Christmas.

"After the holidays, then," said Rose. "We'll set up a schedule together."

"Oh, sure," said Jean. "I'm sorry about these two weeks, Rose, but I'm running around like mad, what with the music school programs and everything else — "

"I wish you were going to that violin concert next week," Rose said. "It would be so good for you."

"But it's the night before vacation. I couldn't possibly make it."

"You could if you cared."

Rose walked away, and Jean watched her go, half annoyed, half sorry for her. Rose had no demands on her time except her music.

Just the same, Jean felt a little guilty about the concert, when she marked her card for a ten o'clock date night the next week.

"Even the night before vacation has to be an early deadline," she grumbled. Francie DeLane's roommate looked at her virtuously and said, "They know how keyed up everyone is over going home."

Jean ignored that and went down to the living room to wait for Phil. If he had been willing to go to the concert tonight as she had suggested when the date first came up, she would have been delighted to hear the famous violinist.

But Phil had laughed at the idea. "Me go to a concert? I went once and that was enough. I'll take you to a movie instead."

"I think I'll go to the concert anyway," she said. "I'm sorry we can't go together."

"You don't want to spend your last night listening to some fiddler," he said incredulously. "Look, honey, the last night before vacation — we've got no time to waste!"

Once she would have said, "So sorry, but I'm going to be busy," or, "Come with me if we've got a date," but not now. It was a measure of her change of heart that when he was late she waited for him. Once she had promised herself she never would wait. She had forgotten that.

Tonight she waited in the living room of the dorm, a book open on her lap, thinking of his philosophy. He had told her once that being prompt was not so important as being relaxed.

"After all, what are we living for?" he had demanded. "Just to beat our brains out to match a clock? I'm the one who sets the time, not the clock."

When he came in, she glanced up from the book she was reading.

"Oh, are you here? Is it that late?"

He grinned at her. "You can't fool me — but the effect is awfully good. Merry Christmas!" He handed her a package wrapped in shiny white paper with a handsome silver ribbon bow.

She closed the book and laid it on the table beside her chair, and gave him his present in Scotch plaid paper, looking very masculine and not nearly so professional as his package, and they opened them together.

"Why, Phil, how thoughtful!" she lifted out a record album of Gieseking. "I've been wanting this like crazy — how did you know?"

He looked pleased. "I thought you looked at it kind of wistfully when we were shopping for that record for Melissa — and for anyone who is playing the piano all the time I just figured it might be good."

He seemed pleased with the golf balls, and juggled three of them expertly in the air.

"Come spring, I'll teach you a good game of golf," he promised her. "We can use these then."

She would like to play golf, she thought. "I haven't any clubs."

"Oh, we can fix that up all right. Get your boots on, now — it's snowing."

His eyes sparkled with the adventure of the first snow, and she was glad as they plowed through the soft whiteness that she was out in the night with Phil instead of listening to a violinist in a concert hall. They made soft balls and tossed them at each other, and Phil rubbed snow on her face while she struggled to put some down his neck.

"Good for your complexion," he told her. "You should see your cheeks now. Red as holly."

The campus was beautiful again. Every branch and twig was brushed with clinging snow, the lawns were misty expanses of white, the snow fell thickly through the air, cold and clean. They walked into town, laughed at a comedy, and sat over coffee.

"I've got an idea for vacation," said Phil. "I think I'm coming to Chicago and see you."

"To Chicago? Now that I'm waiting to see!"

"I mean it," he told her. "I've got an aunt in Chicago, and she always likes to have her favorite nephew visit her. I'll let you know about the time."

She had begun to wonder how he would fit into her life in Sherwood, what Scotty would think of him, how her family would like him. But she could not believe he really meant to come.

"I'll expect you when I see you," she said skeptically.

" Better save me a date," he warned, " or you'll be sorry."

The snow had stopped falling and they walked home the long way, around by the riverbank, watching the snow-covered town and the full moon casting blue shadows on the new-fallen snow, when the campus clock began to strike ten.

" Run! " Jean cried.

But it was hopeless. The river was ten minutes from the dorm, and the door would be locked the moment the clock stopped striking.

" Why take it so hard? " he said, laughing at her hurry. " Didn't you ever figure out a way to get in if you were late? "

He should have watched the time, she thought angrily. If he really cared about her, wouldn't he try to keep her out of trouble?

" Let's not be any later than necessary," she said, trying to keep her anxiety out of her voice. " I'll lose ten date nights for this anyway — "

He raced her through the snow and she was thinking of all possible entries. Rose had a first floor room. She hated to be indebted to Rose, but there was no choice.

They left the path leading to the front door and waded around through the snow to the back. Rooms were lighted the length of the building. Behind the anonymous shades girls were getting ready for bed and for vacation. Jean tried to visualize the position of Rose's room on the hall, third from the end. Some rooms had two windows, some had one. She counted the windows and at last tried one, pulling off her mitten and tapping on the glass with her fingernails.

Her luck was good. Rose peered out from behind the shade and then raised the window.

" This is it," Jean whispered. " Good night, Phil."

" I'll see you in Sherwood," he promised. " Merry Christmas."

Rose watched her climb over the sill with an expression of disapproval, but she said nothing. Sis Fletcher looked up with a companionable grin.

"This window has been in use so much they're detailing the campus watchman to make rounds here between ten and ten fifteen," she said. "You were just lucky to miss him tonight."

"You're wonderful to let me in," said Jean, trying not to shake snow on their rugs. "With Pamela on the house council I'd be in real trouble if I had to go before them — "

"Don't press your luck too far," Rose said oppressively. "How are you going to get upstairs?"

Jean looked cautiously into the hall. "I'll make a dash for the service stairs, if they're still unlocked. Merry Christmas — "

Rose's face softened. "See you next year — and thanks for the record."

"Glad you liked it."

The service stairs were unlocked, and Jean fled gasping up two flights, hoping she would make the third floor unseen before Mrs. Macomber, the dormitory night watchman, came her way. Her luck held. She gained her room unseen and leaned breathing hard against the door.

Melissa eyed her understandingly. "It's hardly worth it," she observed.

Jean shook her head. "It's worth any effort to duck the house council and probation," she said. "Rose let me in her window."

"I'm glad you didn't get in trouble just before vacation," Melissa looked concerned. "Don't let Phil make you too careless, Jean. They're strict about freshmen — you know that."

Jean knew. But now that the danger was past it seemed trivial.

"Let next year take care of itself," she said, as she turned out the light.

[10]

THE WHOLE FAMILY EXCEPT SALLY AND JIMMY CAME DOWN TO meet Jean when she came in to Chicago late Friday night on this first trip home from school. Sally had stayed home with her fiancé to look after Jimmy, who had come down with flu on the last day of school.

"Ricky's got a girl," Betsy announced the moment Jean came out of the train shed. "He gave her a bracelet and they're going steady."

Jean kissed her parents and looked at her sophomore brother who was red with annoyance and an effort at nonchalance. They walked through the station toward the parking lot.

"Who is she?" she asked. "Do I know her?"

"I don't know," he said. "Her name's Karen Frisby, and she's a freshman."

"Cute?"

"Naturally," he said, with scorn for such a stupid question. "Blond and tiny — boy, can she dance!"

"She's pretty nice," said Betsy with reservation. "Awfully skinny, though."

Rick glared at his seventh grade sister. "You're just prejudiced because you're so fat yourself."

"I am not fat," said Betsy in the patient tone of endless repetition.

"Nah — only ten pounds since school started."

"That's enough, Rick," said his father repressively.

Jean looked unobtrusively at Betsy, who was staring away from her hateful brother. The child had gained some weight and Jean suspected she was sensitive about it.

She said comfortingly: "You've got a gorgeous complexion, Betsy. Lots of girls have trouble in seventh grade."

Betsy smiled appreciatively. "Too much color, though."

"Oh, I don't know," said Jean seriously. "You're going to look like Sally, and she was always pretty."

"Well, how does it feel to come home?" asked her father, putting her bag into the trunk of the old green car.

"Wonderful," said Jean, climbing into the back seat.

She felt as if she had come out of the world into shelter and protection, where she could count on being taken care of. But she couldn't tell her parents that. Probably a baby bird felt this way when it made its way back to the nest after the first flight, she thought.

"Scotty has been asking about you," her mother reported. "He seems anxious to see you."

Scotty. The memory of last summer superimposed itself on the memory of last week like a double exposure.

"Perhaps he'll come over tomorrow," Jean said. She watched the Christmas decorations and the falling snow in the light of the street lamps.

"We had the loveliest Christmas service at Overton," she said turning back to her brother and sister. "The whole campus was strung with lights. These trees made me think of it."

They crossed the boundary between Chicago and Sherwood, and Rick began to talk about the high school Christmas festival. That had been important only last year, and now it seemed so far in the past that Jean could not recall her own excitement

about it. Behind the lighted windows of familiar houses, families were collected, warm and intimate. Christmas greens and lights hung in every street. She had forgotten that the elms were so tall, the traffic so heavy, Sherwood so beautiful under a fall of snow.

The front door of the Burnaby house at 29 Juniper Lane was draped in swags of long-leaved pine and lighted with dozens of red and green lights. The big soft flakes fell thickly about her, as Jean walked in from the car. She glanced at the Scotts' house, wondering if Scotty might be watching for her.

She was home again, and home seemed like a haven of privacy and comfort after the dormitory full of girls. Sally and Bob welcomed the family in, and Jean went at once to her piano. It was out of tune, but it still sounded good as she touched it lightly.

"Let's get it tuned," she begged. "I want to play it lots while I'm home."

"I called the tuner the day before yesterday," her mother said apologetically. "I should have thought of it sooner. He said he'd come as soon as he could, but it might be a week."

"That's all right," said Jean generously. She felt too good to be home to let anything annoy her tonight. She went to the window that overlooked the Scotts' house and looked out at the falling snow between the houses. In the lighted window across the lawn Scotty appeared, saw Jean, and waved. He seemed the one person in Sherwood who bridged the gap between the old life and the new, and she felt that she could talk to him, ask him questions, count on his advice.

"Scotty said he'd be over tomorrow morning," Betsy reported, seeing her at the window.

He came in about ten the next day and found Jean in the kitchen cleaning up after her late breakfast.

" Swell to see you home again, Jean," he said. " Give me a cup of coffee and I'll sit around and admire you."

" That's just what I need," Jean told him, filling two cups and sitting down with him at the table in the sunny window. The snow on the back lawn glittered with a million sparkling lights, and a tree trunk threw a long blue shadow across the dazzle. Through the window the sun was warm on their arms.

Scotty grinned, his gray eyes teasing. " You look old and experienced," he told her. " How's Overton? "

" Strenuous," she said. " Living away from home is a complicated business."

She told him about her budget troubles and her lack of time, and he was amused and sympathetic.

" Next semester will be easier," he told her. " How about going to a movie tonight, just to catch up on things? "

When she was with Scotty she was perfectly happy. He had dated no one else while she had been away, he revealed, although he did not imply that she was responsible for that. She liked him better than ever, but knowing how she felt when she was away from him, half forgetting him, liking other men, left her uncertain.

" I'm all mixed up," she confessed, as they stopped for food after the movie. It was a heavenly sensation of freedom to know that she did not have to watch a clock.

" So? " Scotty was studying his menu with obvious attention. " It happens to everyone. I'm going to have toasted caramel roll. What'll you have? "

" The same," Jean laid her menu aside. " I wrote you about Phil, Scotty — "

His mouth hardened. " Look, Jean," he said, " I don't mind knowing what goes on. But don't expect me to advise you about falling in love with someone else."

" I'm not falling in love," she protested.

But the protest was weak.

" Last summer when you were going away to college, it wouldn't have been fair to tie you down to a man back home," his voice was brusque, " so I didn't ask you for any promises. But I don't think I'm going to like Phil, so don't expect me to."

He grinned at her, a friendly smile that took the edge off his words, and she was more confused than ever. Right now Scotty was the man she wanted, and yet how could she be in love with Scotty when she was having such a good time with Phil?

When he left her at her door he stood looking down at her seriously for several minutes. And when he went away without a kiss she was let down and unhappy.

She spent the week visiting her home-coming girl friends, comparing notes on schools, reminiscing about the old days. Several of the girls were planning parties for the week after Christmas, and, fascinated with the sound of Phil, wanted Jean to bring him, if he came to town. Joyce Rhodes was having a big New Year's Eve party, and urged Jean to bring Phil. Scotty was coming too, she said, but that would be all right. You couldn't have too many men.

Jean didn't see Scotty again that week. He had a job that kept him busy every night before Christmas. She spent hours in painful indecision about whether she should give him a Christmas present or not, and finally settled on a popular record that she knew he liked. And then she began to wonder if he would bring the annual Christmas ornament this year. If he did, it would mean that everything was the same, they were good friends, and love could wait.

He had brought a Christmas tree ornament to Sally every year since kindergarten until she began going with Bob in her

freshman year of college. That Christmas he had given the ornament to Jean, and she remembered vividly how thrilled she had been with the little tin Mexican angel with frilled wings. Last year it had been a silver star. She didn't think she could bear it if he broke the custom.

He came in on Christmas Day as he always had and handed her a package with a self-conscious glance.

"I wondered if I ought to start giving this to Betsy," he said, half teasing. "It's for the family anyway. But you can open it," he told her generously.

"Well, thank you too much," she murmured. Now she didn't know whether to give him his record or not. At last she reached under the tree and found it. "This is for you — from all of us," she said. That ought to keep it impersonal. "Oh, how perfectly gorgeous!"

She took out of its box a brilliant, intricately designed ornament of foreign glass and admired it. Then she moved over to the tree. Somehow, as she tried to suspend it from one of the branches, it slipped from her hands and crashed in shreds on the floor.

"Oh, Scotty, I'm sick about that! I don't know how it could have happened!"

She stooped to retrieve the pieces, wanting to cry.

"I'll get the carpet sweeper," he said, going to the closet where he knew it was kept. Sweeping efficiently, he remarked: "Ever since I was five years old my mom has been picking out the indestructible type of ornament. She was always scared I'd drop them. So this year I just thought I'd try something different — but how right she was!"

Jean watched him with a lump in her throat. She felt as if in dropping the fragile ornament she had smashed something between herself and Scotty, just as delicate, just as beautiful,

through clumsy carelessness.

"I suppose you'll never want to bring me another ornament," she said half to herself.

"Chump," he told her kindly. "Next Christmas is another year. I never give presents to other men's fiancées, but if you're ineligible there's always Betsy."

She wanted to assure him that she would not be ineligible, but the words stopped in her throat. How did she know?

Sunday morning a telegram came for Jean: "Arriving Monday afternoon 3:25. Bring out the band. Phil."

So he was actually coming! She had never really believed he would.

Jean drove down to meet him at the station in a mood of high anticipation. Waiting at the door of the train shed, she watched every passenger approach from the train: businessmen slightly stooped, tired mothers with fretful children, beautiful girls with an air of weary superiority. And then she saw Phil.

He was striding toward her, tall and arrogant, and her heart melted when she saw him. She had not known that he could make her feel like this.

Sitting beside him, letting him drive out from the station, she felt as if the two parts of her world had come together at last. She could hardly wait to introduce him to her family and Scotty. She was sure now that they would like him, and she wanted him to like Sherwood. She pointed out places of interest as they drove out, a little disappointed that he seemed so disinterested. And when they stopped in front of 29 Juniper Lane she thought she had never before noticed that things seemed so shabby. She was supersensitive to his reactions.

He met all her family with a polite interest, but there was not the warm response to them that Jean had seen when Bob Carlson had met the Burnabys. Her brothers looked at him as a

stranger they never expected to see again.

"Let's go out and finish that fort," said Jimmy. Politely he turned to Phil. "Do you want to throw some snowballs with us?"

"Thanks just the same, I never throw snowballs."

Rick looked at him with an odd expression and went out with Jimmy.

Betsy sat down like a young lady and observed him closely.

"What grade are you?" he turned to her as if he felt he ought to say something.

"Seventh."

"Oh. Seventh. I can hardly remember that far back. What do you do besides study?"

"I play the violin."

"Ah. Another fiddler."

Something in his tone displeased her. She nodded, closing the conversation, and stood up. "I guess I'll go out with the boys."

"Won't you stay for dinner tonight?" her mother invited him.

"Thanks," he exerted some charm. "My aunt is expecting me. But I'll be back after dinner, if that's all right." He turned to Jean. "I'll borrow Aunt Marie's car and we'll do the town."

"Fine," said Jean. "I want you to meet some of my friends here too."

"I'd better be going," Phil stood up. "See you later, Jean. Nice to have met you, Mrs. Burnaby, Mr. Burnaby." He shook hands and departed. No one said anything.

When Scotty came over that night, Jean was embarrassed to feel that Phil acted more openly possessive than she had ever noticed before, as if he were telling Scotty: "This is my girl, see? Keep away."

Scotty behaved differently too. He was cool and polite and remote, staying only a few minutes, and leaving with the remark: "Well, I don't want to intrude when your time is so limited. Nice to have met you."

Jean took him to the Nightingale Christmas Carnival on Tuesday night, where many of her classmates came back for the occasion, and she was smugly gratified at their surprise and evident approval upon meeting Phil.

She had a party of her own on Wednesday night, to which she had invited the girls and their dates, and they had a wonderful time playing Scrabble and dancing and discussing what they were all doing, and who was going with whom. She had asked Scotty to come, but he had declined, saying he would be busy. Sally returned from Minneapolis with Bob that afternoon, and they joined the party for a few minutes, having as much fun as the freshmen. Jean watched them both for a clue to their feeling about Phil. They were friendly and cordial, and she thought with satisfaction that they thought he was as outstanding as she did.

If Scotty had been there it would have been a perfect evening. She had so hoped that Scotty and Phil would be good friends. This feeling between herself and Phil that had seemed so hard to believe all these weeks would be strengthened, made solid and dependable when he was part of her old world as well as her new world.

And Scotty's friendship would have done all that.

His withdrawal was all of a piece with the rest of this vacation. Nothing was going quite right. Except Phil himself: by the time he left her Thursday night she was sure that she was in love with him, radiantly, securely happy.

Phil told her Thursday morning that he was going home that afternoon. His aunt was driving him to the train.

" But you only came on Monday," Jean cried in protest. " O Phil, I was counting on having you here for tonight! We're invited to Joyce's house with the crowd."

" I'm sorry too," he sounded genuinely regretful. " But the folks called last night — they want Aunt Marie to visit them this week end — so I've got to go along with her."

She couldn't quarrel about his obligation to his parents. She subdued her protest, concealed her disappointment gallantly, and promised to see him at school next week. Then she telephoned Joyce that she couldn't come to her party after all.

" But we can't do without you," Joyce cried. " Look, if your college man has gone home I'm going to call Scotty and tell him to bring you."

" No, thanks," said Jean. " It's so late in the day — I'd hate for him to think — "

" Don't give it a thought," said Joyce blithely. " I've got this party all set up for sets of four, and without you the whole thing is ruined. You just plan to be here. Scotty wasn't bringing anyone else, anyway."

She didn't want to go, Jean kept telling herself. But when Scotty called at four o'clock and said, " I guess I'm elected to take you to Joyce's party tonight, Jean, how about it? " she found herself happy to accept.

It was the only evening she had gone out with Scotty since that first movie date, and she wondered how he would be. She knew that tonight he was taking her only because Joyce had asked him to.

She was still puzzled when he brought her home again. He had seemed to enjoy himself, joining in the square dancing, the card games, the reminiscences and storytelling with gusto. He had sat at the piano and played popular duets with Jean, improvising a catchy eight-to-the-bar bass while she played a

syncopated melody in the treble. He had taught the crowd a couple of uproarious games he had learned in Colorado, and a new square dance, playing the music and calling the figures. She had never seen him so entertaining and lovable.

But when they came home afterward he seemed silent and introspective.

"What's the matter, Scotty?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said abruptly. "Not a thing. I feel just fine. Good party, wasn't it?"

"It was wonderful," she said. "I certainly appreciate your taking me, Scotty. I thought perhaps I ought to stay home—"

"Because your boy friend couldn't stay?"

"I don't like that tone of voice," she told him. "I don't know why you and Phil couldn't have been friends, Scotty."

He slammed his hand down on the steering wheel, and unintentionally hit the horn ring which squawked loudly in the quiet night. Jean giggled in spite of herself.

"You ought to know," he said sharply, "or else you've got less sense than I gave you credit for, Jean."

"Well—" she was half ashamed of herself for seeming obtuse, "I suppose when I like two people as much as I like you and Phil, it's only natural to want you to like each other."

"Maybe it's natural for you to want that," he said, "but it would be the most unlikely thing in the world to happen. However—" He stared through the windshield, his mouth in a straight line, and then turned back to her. "I wouldn't like Phil in any case," he told her. "He isn't the kind of person I do like. And if you want to know, Jean, I'm surprised that you do."

She looked straight ahead, hurt at his criticism, swiftly defensive, adjusting painfully to the idea that Scotty hadn't liked Phil at all.

"Well," she looked down at her hands, twisting her fingers

together as she talked. " It's just one of those things, I guess. I can't seem to do anything about it."

" It's like that, is it? " He looked at her soberly.

She nodded. Silently he took her up to the door and waited while she found her key and fitted it into the lock.

" If you find out that he isn't the guy you think he is," Scotty said, as she pushed the door open, " will you let me know? "

She turned. " Are you sure you want me to tell you? "

" Who can be sure of anything? " he asked with a half-smile. " Remember what we said last summer? Sometimes you wonder how long things can last — "

She looked out at the snow, frowning slightly.

" I didn't intend to mention it," Scotty said, his voice purposely casual, " but it's lasted a long time for me — "

She glanced at him quickly.

" So — if this one doesn't last for you, don't forget the boy you left behind you — "

On that he turned and left her, and she wanted to cry. When she tried to remember Phil, all she could see was Scotty's face.

She was very quiet at dinner on New Year's Day, thinking about things, hardly hearing the amicable competition for attention that went on about her.

" You're not brooding about that fellow, are you, Jean? " her father asked, over dessert.

" I'm not brooding," she said with dignity. " I just wish he could have stayed over today."

" I'm just as glad he couldn't," her father said. " Where did you pick *him* up? "

Shocked and hurt, Jean stared at him. " Didn't you *like* Phil? Why, you acted as if you did! "

" Naturally I'd be polite to a friend of yours in my house," her father said. " But I don't have to like him, do I? "

Speechlessly Jean tried to eat some plum pudding, but it stuck in her throat.

"He's for the birds," said Jimmy, who had just picked up the current phrase of rejection. "I like Scotty. I don't see why you had to have *him* around."

Jimmy had liked not only Scotty but Jeff and Bob Carlson, Jean remembered. Everybody but Phil.

"Didn't *you* like Phil?" she demanded of Rick.

Rick had become more tactful since last year.

"Oh, he was all right, I guess." His lack of enthusiasm was revealing.

"He reminded me of someone I knew in high school," Sally said. "Of course I saw Phil only for a minute Wednesday evening. There was probably no resemblance between him and Eddie. But he seemed so different from most of the boys I've known."

Mrs. Burnaby was diplomatically silent. But, looking from one to another of her family, Jean felt that they were a closed circle, closed against her and her love. This must be part of growing up, she told herself, hunting for reassurance, this going separate ways, liking other persons than your family liked, finding your own path regardless of their opinions. She was not going to be stampeded into loving Scotty just because her family all thought she should.

Hurt and defensive, she remembered Phil as romantic and wonderful, and she told herself that since this visit he and she were genuinely in love. Nothing could change that.

[11]

JEAN SAT AT HER DESK ON A WEDNESDAY NIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF January and stared at her harmony assignment through eyes that blurred and refused to focus. The telephone rang and she tightened all over, telling herself that she would *not* jump up and interrupt her studies; she would not keep expecting a call. She stared at her book hopelessly. She could not read two consecutive lines, and she dropped her head in her hands and let herself think.

So she was in love, and it was hideous. It shouldn't be like this, but it was and there was nothing she could do about it.

Phil had met her at the train on her return, he had called daily, he had met her every day for a week. And now for three days she had not seen him or heard from him.

She huddled miserably over her book, thinking of all the possibilities. The phone rang again, and again she froze into a cold, tight knot, listening.

" Call for Jean Burnaby."

She sprang up so fast her chair fell over and she told herself she was a fool. Take it easy. Relax.

" Jean? Meet me at the lib in half an hour."

" But it's quarter past eight, Phil. I was trying to study — I'm not dressed to go out."

" Oh, come on, honey! You can make it. I just got to thinking how long it's been, and I wanted to see you."

" Well — " This was the plea she could never resist. " All right, I'll be there."

She threw off her bathrobe and put on her blouse and skirt again.

" Are you going out now? " Melissa asked. Jean resented the criticism in her tone.

" I'm going over to the library for a few minutes."

" Phil crooked his little finger, I suppose."

" I wish you would not always be blaming Phil for things. Can he help it if Pamela chases him till he can hardly get out of her sight? "

Melissa turned around in her chair and faced Jean.

" Listen, Jean. Please listen to me. All the girls tell me things they can't say to you. He can't be serious. It's one thing to go out with him just to tease Pamela, and it's another thing to let yourself go and be brokenhearted."

" And who says I'm brokenhearted? "

" I can tell. You can't study, you're mixed up and irritable — you're not the same girl you were last fall."

" Do you think telling me is going to make any difference? "

Melissa sighed. " Some things you have to find out for yourself. But I like you too much to watch you go to pieces. Please, Jean — don't go over and meet him like this. If you'd just stand him up, say no, once in a while, act indifferent, you'd be better off. He's that kind."

" Melissa, when we began rooming together I liked you just fine. But I'm beginning to get awfully mad at the way you act about Phil. Now, for Pete's sake, stop nagging! "

She threw on her winter coat. Melissa, with a set face, turned back to her desk and began to study again. Jean slammed the

door behind her, wishing she weren't going, wishing Melissa had urged her to go instead of trying to persuade her not to, wishing things were different. Wishing. But Phil was waiting.

The wind blew cold and penetrating down the avenue, as she bent her head and walked against it up to the library at the top of the incline.

Phil was waiting inside the big glass doors. The entrance hall was lined with cases of special exhibits, and at the end a divided flight of steps led up to the research rooms, and another flight led down to the ground floor, where periodical materials were filed and where two reading rooms were divided by magazine racks and files into semiprivate alcoves.

Phil smiled at her and said, "Let's go down this time, shall we?" They sauntered toward the steps going down. Everything was all right again, and she was glad she had come, in spite of Melissa.

In the magazine room she found a French magazine and Phil hunted for a back issue of *Fortune* and they settled down in the farthest corner where they were quite alone. A serious student sat in the alcove near the desk, rattling pages as she hunted through her publication, and the librarian, a hard-working student, was doing his own studying at the desk as he waited for the evening to pass.

Phil and Jean looked at each other and laughed silently. Thank goodness for the girl who was rattling pages and moving back and forth to the shelves. The feeling of conspiracy and concealment added to the excitement of being together. Occasionally they turned pages of their own.

At nine fifteen, Phil said in a whisper: "I've finished my research here. One more kiss, and let's move on."

Quietly they tiptoed out to the hall again.

"I'll dare you to go to the Sweet Shop with me," he said.

"Can we make it before ten?"

"You've gotten in before, haven't you?"

In her present emotional state, Jean felt that nothing mattered — not rules or studies; not Mrs. Buxton; not any of her friends — as much as being with Phil.

There was a fire escape at the end of the hall where Jean's room was, and she had come to an understanding with her roommate, after Christmas, that if she had not returned to their room by five minutes after ten, Melissa was to unlock the fire escape door, which Jean would lock after she got in. This seemed simple and foolproof, although there were such hazards as running into Mrs. Macomber inside the dormitory, or old Mr. Bjornsen, the campus watchman and caretaker, on the grounds. But it was an alternative to using Rose's window too often. And so far it had worked well.

Now without further protest she accompanied Phil to the Sweet Shop, which was, on week nights, safer than the Snack Bar. You were less likely to be observed by acquaintances at the Sweet Shop. As they entered this time, Jean saw Pamela sitting in the first booth near the door with a boy whom she recognized as the treasurer of the senior class. Both of them looked at Phil and Jean as if they were strangers, and Jean felt a chill of apprehension.

"I've got to get back before she does," Jean muttered to Phil, as they ordered coffee and doughnuts. "Now that she knows I'm out — "

"We'll let her see us leave," Phil agreed.

Accordingly, they left the Sweet Shop at a quarter of ten. But it was ten forty-five before Jean crept up the fire escape steps, to the glass door at the third floor landing. She climbed the iron stair gaily, happier than she had felt about Phil for several days.

He had made a date for tomorrow, he had asked her to the dance on Saturday night after exam week, and he had talked about Key Club — the best club on campus, he had said — adding to tease her, " All my girls belong to Key Club."

" But some of them don't like me," she had reminded him. He had laughed, knowing what she meant.

" It takes more than a couple of votes to keep a girl out," he told her, confidently. " I'll send the word around, and you'll be in. Don't worry! "

It had all sounded so good, as if her success and prestige were important to him. She reached the third floor landing, confident and happy.

The door was locked.

She pulled and rattled the door, shivering in the cold wind that had grown stronger since early evening. The door was bolted firmly to prevent intruders from entering. She tapped on the glass hoping some late student would hear her. Secrecy didn't matter now as much as getting in. Through the glass pane she could see the long hall, dimly illumined by the lighted transoms and the nightlight. Melissa must have forgotten, she thought angrily. But how could she forget, when she was going to bed alone and Jean wasn't there?

She pressed her face to the glass, peering into the dim interior, and down the hall she could distinguish a figure sitting watchfully in the telephone bay. Suddenly she recognized Pamela, and hope drained away.

She crept down the stairs again, trembling with tension and angry fear. The wind was cold, the iron steps looked uncertain and widely spaced in the darkness, the ground was far, far down. She clung to the railing and tried not to look farther down than the next step, for which she had to feel her way.

With every fearful step she grew more angry. Not until she set foot on solid ground did she begin to wonder how she was going to get in.

She went around to Rose's window and knocked. But the room was dark and her knocks did not awaken the girls. Mr. Bjornsen's light showed at the far corner of the hall and she scurried back to the front of the building.

There she stood a minute, trying to think of some other open door. There was another fire escape at the opposite end of the building, but the doors there would be bolted too. There was a service entrance, some basement windows. But almost certainly the door from the basement, even if she could get into it, would be bolted into the first floor hall. Mrs. Buxton and Mrs. Macomber were both very cautious about locking up.

She stared at the main entrance again. It was eleven thirty now, and there was nothing to do but ring the bell and get Mrs. Buxton out of bed, which would infuriate her even more than the breach of rules.

Jean rang the bell and waited, growing colder every second.

At last the door opened. Mrs. Buxton stood there, wrapped in a navy-blue bathrobe, her lavender-tinted hair in pin curls. She did not look roused from sleep; she looked as if she had been waiting.

"What does this mean?" she inquired coldly.

"I'm terribly sorry, Mrs. Buxton," Jean said in a small voice. "I got in a jam and couldn't get back sooner."

Mrs. Buxton beckoned her in. "Come to my room and explain."

"There's nothing more to explain," Jean said, her anger beginning to rise at having to talk about it. "I was talking to a friend, and we forgot the time."

Mrs. Buxton seated herself upright on a straight chair as if

she were prepared for a showdown.

"Jean, I have felt ever since last fall that you were not giving us the co-operation, the friendly consideration and effort, that Houghton House is accustomed to." Jean stared at her hands. "In a house like this we are one big happy family," said the housemother. "We work for and with each other, we try to help one another. I didn't make the rules — although I must say I approve of them. They are made by the college. But we must work together to make them effective. I've spoken to the dean about you before this."

Startled, Jean jerked her head up and looked at Mrs. Buxton. "What have I done?"

"It's hard to put your finger on what you've done," Mrs. Buxton enunciated carefully. "It's your attitude. You have given the impression that you don't believe in the rules, that you are an exception, and that you do us a favor by co-operating when you feel like it, and otherwise it's your own affair. I've felt for a long time that you were going to give us trouble."

Jean's head went down as she listened, and a warm, embarrassed flush mingled with her anger. No one had ever called her a troublemaker before.

"You were late once before and seemed to have no excuse. Now I'm telling you for the last time, Jean, when one of my girls stays out like this on a school night until almost midnight, it is my business to find out why. Where were you tonight?"

"I was studying with Phil Stewart," Jean mumbled, "and we went out for a cup of coffee afterward."

"Phil Stewart!" Mrs. Buxton's tone said clearly, "I do not approve of Phil Stewart," and Jean could feel her anger rising again. Mrs. Buxton's tone became maternal.

"That is exactly the kind of thing we try to guard against," she said kindly. "You freshmen are away from home for the

first time, thrown into a strange, new world where you feel free and independent. And it's good for you to be that way. But you are still young girls, and it is the responsibility of the college to see that you do not go — astray." She groped for the trite word and pronounced it with satisfaction. "The college has delegated the responsibility for Houghton House girls to me."

Half-horrified, half-amused, Jean found herself struggling to suppress a yawn. Mrs. Buxton frowned at her.

"You girls do not realize how much sleep you need, how much time for study. That is why we regulate your hours and tell you when you must be in. Now when you are juniors and seniors, we allow much more latitude."

But she's said all this before, Jean wailed to herself. She says it all the time. She yawned in spite of herself.

"So, Jean," Mrs. Buxton sounded judicial, "I'm going to recommend the maximum penalty this time. This is the second time, you recall. You will appear before the house council tomorrow night, and let them decide the penalty for this offense."

She smiled bravely as if her sentence hurt her more than Jean, and gestured dismissal.

Trembling with unreasonable anger, Jean crept upstairs and turned on one of the study lamps.

Melissa stirred sleepily. "What's the matter? Are you sick?"

The enormity of her injury suddenly appalled Jean. She couldn't discuss it any longer. She felt that Melissa was somehow to blame, but she wanted no excuses.

"No," she said shortly. She switched off the light, undressed, and climbed into bed, turning over furious alternatives in her mind. She would ignore Mrs. Buxton and do as she pleased. She would leave Overton and go back to Northern University, where she could live at home and forget these infantile rules

and restrictions. She could get expelled and be glad about it. She wanted to leave as soon as possible.

But Phil was here.

Suddenly she remembered Pamela in the Sweet Shop, Pamela sitting in the telephone bay at eleven o'clock tonight, and she knew exactly how the fire escape door came to be locked.

[12]

CAMPUSED!

Jean was confined to her room for a week, except for meals and classes. She was not allowed to answer the telephone, to study at the library, to go to the journalism office or the Snack Bar, to play bridge in the living room, to shop in town, to have any dates.

She sat at her desk and tried to realize the full implication of the drastic penalty. She couldn't see Phil for a week. They had a date for Saturday night, and she couldn't even talk to him about it.

Pamela Johnson looked in her door, checking up with an expression of satisfaction, and Jean looked coldly away. The house council had agreed unanimously on the penalty, and Jean knew perfectly well that it was fair. Other girls had been campused during the year, and it had seemed something of a joke. She hadn't realized how serious it could be when it happened to her. Pamela had delivered an unctuous speech, similar to Mrs. Buxton's sentiments, and had urged the girls to fix the maximum penalty. Jean was not surprised that Pamela exerted pressure against her. But the unanimous agreement did surprise her. For the first time she began to think that perhaps her offense was more serious than she had believed.

The telephone rang and she glanced automatically at the clock. Seven thirty. It might be Phil. She crept to the door and listened for the voice answering the telephone down the hall.

" I'm sorry. She can't come to the phone. Who is calling? "

Jean went back to her desk and held her head in her hands. Presently the freshman who had answered the call knocked on the door and gave her a message on a folded slip of paper: " Phil Stewart called for Jean Burnaby. 7:30, Jan. 15." It was the most maddening part of the whole situation that she could not talk to Phil.

Then, with a slight smile, she began to write a note, thinking as she did so that it seemed like the eighteenth century or something. When he knew the details of her confinement, he could meet her after a class and at least walk across campus with her to the next one. Her eyes began to sparkle. She could salvage something out of this situation after all.

The week went faster than she had dreamed it could.

The girls were sympathetic, dropping in and reporting campus gossip, taking messages, delivering notes for her. Melissa explained that she had unlocked the fire escape door at ten fifteen, found it bolted at ten thirty, and unlocked it again. Everyone knew now that Pamela had locked it again, and sat in the hall on watch until Jean had been admitted by Mrs. Buxton. Opinion was divided about Pamela's conduct, but it was agreed that, as a senior counselor, she had acted within the limits of her office.

Dotty stopped by frequently and cheered her up.

" Nothing like love to get you in trouble," she told Jean. " I remember once last year when I went to Cincinnati with a date for a show, and when we got out it was too late to get home even by our late permissions. We decided to stay in two different hotels in Cincinnati, and call back to say we were staying with

our folks in Coalport — you know, just outside of town — just to calm down Mrs. Buxton. Unfortunately when the operator put in the call she said, 'Hotel Plaza calling,' and Mrs. Buxton caught on right away. Crime just doesn't pay."

"What happened?" Jean was fascinated with Dotty's troubles.

"Oh, we got sent home for a week," said Dotty casually. "We were told to think it over and our folks had to come back and talk to the dean. I've been a good girl ever since."

She gave Jean a glaring abstract design in black and coral with chartreuse spots in it.

"Just to lighten your confinement," she told her. "If you stare at it long enough modern art begins to mean something — or else it doesn't. Try it and see what happens."

Jean laughed and tacked the design on the wall over her bed. Melissa shrank and shaded her eyes. "Do I have to be exposed to that for long?" she begged.

"It's just an experiment for Dotty," said Jean. But at the end of the week she liked it no better than at the beginning, and gave it back.

"Think nothing of it," Dotty comforted her. "Some people have a talent for understanding this sort of thing, like me, and some don't. I won't hold it against you."

When Jean could not go to the library to study or attend a movie with the girls on Wednesday or go to a recital on Thursday as she had planned, she found that she was concentrating on her studies more intently than at any time since school had opened, and for the first time since October she experienced some of the intellectual excitement she had discovered in high school. She smiled at the idea that there were advantages in being confined, but she had to admit that in isolation she was finding again a self she had lost sight of. She

admitted too that Mrs. Buxton's remarks about her attitude had been justified, however platitudinous they had sounded. She acknowledged, in fact, that she had been pretty juvenile about things.

Phil wrote her a note which she treasured, apologizing for being responsible for her plight, and promising to call the first night that she could talk to him on the telephone. She looked for him daily after classes, and once he met her as she came out of the music school and walked to her next class with her.

"I suppose I should have known better than to try and ignore the rules when I know what's happened to other girls in the house," Jean said, as they mingled with a crowd of students moving on the icy walk across campus.

He smiled down at her, a lazy, sidelong grin that twisted her heart.

"It takes experience," he said. "A freshman always gets into trouble once, and then she learns how to stay out of it."

"You sound as if you were used to your girls being campused," she told him.

"Oh, it happens to everyone sometime," he said.

"It's not going to happen to me again," she said. "From here on I'm in on time. It isn't worth it—getting a reputation for being a troublemaker."

"Isn't it?"

She met his glance directly and shook her head, laughing at him. Nothing really mattered too much, as long as Phil and she were in love. But being campused did give her time to study for the semester exams coming up in another week.

And then examination week was upon her. Her campus sentence was ended, but for ten days before and during exams, with will power born of necessity, she shut out everything else and studied, wishing she had not cut so many classes, wishing she

had worked harder during the semester.

Phil laughed at her during one break she took in her studying to drink coffee with him.

"You're just a freshman," he told her. "You'll learn as you go along, but I'll show you some short cuts. The boys have worked out a good system over the years, and we pull our friends through, but good."

He described a complex and secret technique for carrying information to the examinations. "Anyone can do it, and they never catch on. Once you learn the method, you're in for Phi Beta Kappa."

Jean listened with her eyes cast down, pushing the salt and pepper shakers back and forth on the table. Cheating had always repelled her. But this was Phil, who was wonderful, and also a senior, and perhaps there was something in his idea that she had overlooked in her youth. It couldn't be entirely wrong if he did it.

Phil said: "I know you think this is cheating, Jean. But look at it this way: this is our last shot at getting ready for life. Life is competition, and you've got to keep up with your competition or you won't survive. This is the place to learn how to get ahead and keep ahead. Nothing immoral about that, is there?"

She repressed any disagreement she might have felt. She couldn't disagree with Phil, not about something as fundamental as cheating on the college exams. Either it was all right or it was all wrong.

"I'll work it out somehow," she said, smiling at him brightly. "I'll let you know how I come out. And in the meantime I can't do anything till the exams are over except study. And I mean study — just plain ordinary boning."

He grinned. "Even for me exams take some getting ready for," he admitted. "When are you through?"

"Thursday morning," she said. "The last one is piano."

"I'll take you out to lunch Thursday," he said. "There's a good hotel in town. We'll celebrate."

During the next few days Phil's infallible techniques for passing exams kept crossing her mind, and it was the first time in her life that Jean had ever been tempted to cheat. It was the first time she had felt unsure of herself. She had let slip too many study hours, had bluffed too many assignments.

She sagged in her chair the night before the English exam and asked Melissa seriously: "What's the matter with me? Am I a dope all of a sudden?"

Melissa leaned back as if she were glad to have a break.

"Sometimes I think you are," she said candidly. "What's worrying you? English exam?"

Jean nodded. "What I hate is the feeling that I'm losing my grip. My goodness, I used to be an A student. Nothing ever bothered me. I studied right on schedule and never gave a thought to exams because I was ready. And now the older I get, the more rattled. That doesn't make sense."

"Maybe you are losing your grip," said Melissa. "You never felt like this about a boy in high school, did you?"

Jean wrung her hands. "That's what worries me," she said. "I was the girl that knew all the answers and never lost her head. And here I can't eat, I can't sleep, I can't keep rules, I can't study — all on account of Phil Stewart."

"Hardly worth it," said Melissa dryly. "Can't you reason yourself out of it?"

Jean sat very still a minute. Then she shook her head.

"I don't think I want to," she whispered.

The exams were harder than she had expected, and for the first time she faced the possibility of failure. It was a shock that forced her out of her dream world where everything seemed

easy. She studied even harder for French after the terrifying English exam, she practiced an extra hour a day on the piano after the appalling French exam. The grades were to be posted two days after the last exam, and when the day came she could hardly bear to look.

C in English, she read with dismay. B-minus in French. B in music theory. C in piano. And all through high school she had gotten straight A's. Of all of them, the grade that really shook her was the C in piano. She really thought she had done better than that.

"You can't bluff piano-playing," Miss Chester told her bluntly, when Jean questioned her exam grade at her next lesson. "You thought when you could read through an exercise up to tempo at your lesson, lack of practice didn't show or matter. But the lack always shows up somewhere else. Look at that passage in thirds in your piece: you've been going over that for six weeks and you couldn't do it well on the exam. If you'd put in fifteen minutes a day on the exercise in thirds, the way I told you to do, you'd have had that piece solid by now. That's why I gave you a C — it's all your work is worth this semester."

Torn between anger and chagrin and honest embarrassment at the truth of Miss Chester's verdict, Jean wondered aloud if music were worth all the work it took.

"Well, is it?" she challenged Paula Chester. "What if you — liked — someone like Phil Stewart? Wouldn't you think he was more important even than music?"

The moment she said the words she recognized her impertinence, and was embarrassed for herself. Paula Chester said nothing for several seconds. Then she leaned forward and said in a controlled voice: "I suppose if I were a freshman, I'd think love was more important than anything. But when love fails you, you will need something to take its place. I'd suggest that you

let your music be important to you too."

Miss Chester repeated what Phil had said, only her meaning was different: "All your life you will face competition, Jean. No matter what you want to do, someone else will be wanting to do it too, and the best man will get the job and hold it, whether it is accompanying or leading a school orchestra or teaching private pupils. The only security you have is to be able to do the job a little better. When you know you can do that, you have nothing to worry about. And you have the capacity to play better than perhaps three fourths of the students in the conservatory today, if you work up to your capacity. If you don't — anyone could do it better."

Jean began playing the chromatic thirds slowly and accurately with her right hand.

"There is nothing more futile than a half-baked musician, who is always apologizing for not being able to play better," Miss Chester said, glancing at Jean with a dubious expression, as if she were thinking, You haven't got the stuff after all, I'm afraid.

"I know what you mean," said Jean, tingling at the meaning she read in Miss Chester's eyes. "All right. I've felt bad enough about this semester's work. Next time will be different."

She was going to show her, she told herself. She had to prove something.

"But you can't afford to cut a single practice," her teacher warned.

As if Miss Chester had foreseen the temptation that would beset her, Phil appeared at the head of the stairs as Jean was on her way to the practice room.

"Come on over to the *Envoy* office for a minute," he urged. "Then we can get a cup of coffee."

"I've got to practice," Jean demurred. "This is my regular

time.'

He brushed off the excuse, taking her arm masterfully.

"You don't have to practice the first day of the new semester, Dame Myra," he said. "Come on — you've got weeks to make up this one time."

She stood still a minute, debating with herself, feeling herself weakening. Then she remembered that grade in piano and Miss Chester's words, and the expression that said, "It takes more than talent, and I don't know if you've got anything more than that after all — "

Abruptly she freed her elbow from Phil's possessive grasp.

"I'm awfully sorry, Phil. I'd love to have coffee, but I can't afford to cut a single practice hour, and I'd never be able to make it up. The rooms are scheduled too tightly."

He was surprised at her resistance, surprised and annoyed.

"Suit yourself," he said. "I just thought it would be fun to get together. I keep forgetting what a busy little girl you are."

"It would be fun," said Jean, placatingly. "Only next semester has got to be different as far as my work is concerned."

"Just as you say," he said coldly. "Call me up sometime when you aren't too busy."

He turned on his heel and walked away, and she felt tears smarting behind her eyes. She was so wretched that the hour she spent at the piano did very little good after all. The only satisfaction in it was that she had not cut the hour. But she asked herself, as she walked toward the dining hall at noon, if she wouldn't have been just as well off cutting it — then she wouldn't have had this overhanging misery.

She went over to the Snack Bar at four o'clock, hoping she would see Phil there. If they just ran into each other spontaneously, perhaps everything would straighten itself out.

He was there in his usual corner, and he looked up as she

came in and smiled at her. She waved and was prepared to make her way to his table when she looked again more carefully. He was not alone. He was with Pamela.

Jean sat down with a group of girls she knew and ordered a Coke. But she could hardly swallow. It seemed vitally important not to let the girls know how she was feeling, and she joined in their conversation and listened to their gossip with as nearly normal a manner as she could put on. But after twenty minutes she told the girls she had to get back to the house and left them

" What's the matter with you? " Melissa inquired, when Jean came into the room.

" I turned Phil down for coffee this morning because of a practice hour," Jean said, " and this afternoon I saw him in the Snack Bar with Pamela." In spite of herself her voice shook on the last word.

Melissa turned toward her quickly.

" What that boy needs," she said forcibly, " is to be turned down more often. You did exactly the right thing."

" It isn't as easy as it used to be," Jean said with a wry smile.

" It never is." Melissa spoke as if she were years older. " But just remember when you first met Phil, and when you were never going to fall for him. You treated him as casually as possible — and he always came back for more."

But she hadn't cared then. When you care it shakes your confidence, Jean thought, wishing she knew now what to do.

When the telephone rang at seven thirty and the call came for Jean, she ran down the hall breathless with hope.

It was Phil.

[13]

WITH THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND SEMESTER THE CLUBS BEGAN rushing the freshmen who would be pledged before the first of March.

Jean had not given much thought to joining a club in the early part of the year. But Phil had remarked months ago that of course she must belong to Key Club, and she had recognized since then that it was the most important club on the campus, with the outstanding girls, class officers, prestige, and of course Pamela. With Phil's assumption that his girl belonged to Key Club, it became important to join that club.

Club membership and rushing were now the chief subjects of conversation at every meal. Melissa was interested in Masque, which had a large proportion of drama students. Another club was made up of town girls who lived in Overton with their families. Dotty Frank belonged to Kittredge, for which name there seemed to be no explanation, except that one of the founders sixty years before had either borne it or had a famous grandfather whom the club had decided to honor.

Dotty shrugged off the whole question of clubs.

"I thought last year I ought to belong to something, and Kittredge was the only club that asked me," she said frankly. "The girls are nice, I guess. Only we don't have much in com-

mon. Just one of those mistakes every freshman makes sometime. I can't urge you to join my club because it doesn't mean that much to me. But if you want to be rushed, I'll put your name in."

Sis Fletcher said: "I'm in a hole this year. Key Club is rushing half the freshmen on campus, and I'm a sophomore officer in it, and they won't send an invitation to my own roommate — and how am I going to explain that? I've badgered the girls, but they say what's the use of rushing someone they've already made up their minds about, and they don't want Rose. The whole club business is a can of worms, believe me."

She glanced at Jean speculatively as she spoke, and Jean wondered why. Her invitation to Key Club's first big party had come yesterday, and she was very relaxed about the whole thing. After being a Nightingale in high school, where sororities were much more exclusive and important than here in college, she felt that there was no problem any longer. Many Key Club girls had been friendly, even in the face of Pamela Johnson's hostility, and membership in a club depended on the vote of two thirds of the members. Very different from high school sororities, where three votes could keep a girl out.

"I should think Rose would enjoy Lyre," said Jean. "She's so serious about her music."

"I should think you'd like Lyre yourself," Sis Fletcher said abruptly.

Jean glanced at her, not even wondering at her suggestion.

"Not me," she said lightly. "I like music, but not enough to join a club with other musicians. Heaven forbid!"

"But why?" Sis leaned forward. She seemed to be very much interested.

Jean shrugged. "Oh, I don't know," she said. "Rose, for instance — she's so intense about it all. I couldn't bear to spend a

lot of time with her. I want to enjoy my music — not take it like a heavy-duty assignment. And lots of the musicians are odd."

"But you do have to give up a lot of things for it, don't you?" Sis persisted.

"Well, certainly," said Jean, "and lots of things I don't give up. You like to play hockey, I noticed this fall — but did you want to join the Phys. Ed. club and live for hockey or basketball?"

"No, certainly not," agreed Sis. "But some of the requirements — in Key Club, for instance — take more time than other clubs that make an allowance for the special interests of their girls."

Now Jean looked straight at her. "You mean a music major couldn't give enough time to Key Club?"

"Something like that," Sis looked uncomfortable. "We like our girls to be big shots on campus, presidents of organizations, and things like that, and they take hours of time. Really. You have no idea how much time somebody like Pauline Soames spends at the *Envoy* office. And even in the speech department — Masque pledges most of the speech girls, but it's a Key Club girl that gets the lead in the spring talent show every year, and why? Because she's been spending all winter getting ready for that lead. See what I mean?"

But Phil had said that he would see that she made Key Club, Jean remembered. She was not going to let herself worry, in spite of the veiled implications in Sis's conversation. Sis liked her. Lots of the other girls did. She was not going to worry, she repeated to herself.

When she met the assembled membership at the first big party of the fortnight, she tried to assess their reactions to herself. They were all cordial, friendly, entertaining, with that burnished veneer of hospitality that she recognized from her

own sorority days. You couldn't tell what they were thinking.

Pauline Soames chatted with her cordially about the *Envoy* and mentioned the music reviews that Jean had contributed. Brenda Lister asked about Sherwood and her high school days, and seemed impressed to learn that she had belonged to a high school sorority. Carolyn Cummings talked about her own freshman mistakes and laughed easily at Jean's comments, leaving Jean feeling that she and Carolyn would enjoy each other when they knew each other better. And those were Pamela's best friends, she thought, with a tingle of confidence as she walked home later with Melissa. Both girls had been invited to the party, and Melissa was interested in comparing the Masque party the following night with Key Club. She had an open mind, she said, on the advantages of both groups.

The pattern of rushing followed the pattern Jean had known in high school, becoming more intricate as the fortnight went by. Following the big first party, at which at least a hundred and fifty freshman girls had been entertained, there were smaller parties for a progressively select guest list. Jean played bridge with the girls, ate lunch in town with them, and received, without astonishment, the invitation for the final and significant tea, as did Melissa, on Sunday afternoon.

At the tea she noticed the other guests, remembering how she had felt (was it only two years ago?) at the important last party of the Nightingales.

She walked home with Melissa in a bemused state of satisfaction, feeling a pleasurable certainty that the important and coveted invitation would arrive tomorrow, and a relaxed relief that this time there would be none of the harrowing tension that she had known when the Nightingales had rushed her. This time she knew the girls liked her, and she liked them.

Phil called early that evening, eager to know how she had

gotten along with the rushing, confident as she was herself that at this time tomorrow she would be wearing the gold-and-blue pledge ribbons of Key Club.

"Just exactly what happens?" she asked him again, because at this stage of the business it was delightful to hear over and over how she would be pledged.

"They deliver the invitation to the dormitories during the morning Monday," he told her, "and you'll get it at twelve o'clock. Everyone gets the invitations at the same time. Then *if* you accept the invitation" — they both laughed delightedly — "you join the girls at the Key Club table in the dining hall. The invitation tells you where to go. All the dining halls co-operate with pledge day, and I think Key Club will have the center table in Houghton House, because that's the biggest dining room."

"But what about the girls who aren't being pledged?" Jean asked.

"Oh, they have a special table too, with flowers and trimmings," he said carelessly. "They all eat together — to console each other, I presume. Anyway, there aren't very many."

Jean repeated the conversation to Melissa, becoming excited in spite of herself. Melissa looked at her soberly through her blue-rimmed glasses.

"I wish I were as sure of things as you seem to be," she remarked. "When I think how we've needled Pamela and some of her friends, I can't imagine that they'd let us into their club."

The first small prick of doubt touched Jean's heart.

"But it takes only two thirds of the members to vote us in," she said easily. "I've been through all this, Melissa, and two thirds is a simple matter. Why — they've got sixty girls in that club! Do you think twenty are going to vote against us, just because Pamela is annoyed? Nonsense. Don't give it a thought.

O Melissa!" She turned and hugged Melissa suddenly. "I'm so glad we're going to be in the same club. I thought at first you might like Masque better."

They arranged to meet in the hall of Houghton House the next day before they asked for the mail.

Together they stood at the desk and studied the boxes before them, trying to guess the contents of the envelopes. Mrs. Buxton gave each of the girls a handful of letters, magazines, and circulars.

"Let's read the mail in our room," whispered Jean.

Together they climbed the stairs, and Jean's heart began the hard pounding that for her accompanied suspense. She wanted to sort through the letters she held, but she wanted even more to wait till she was in her room. She looked over at Melissa's mail to see if there were matching envelopes in each handful, but she could not tell.

They closed the door of the room behind them, rushed to their desks, and began sorting letters.

Jean had a letter from Kim, postmarked Brazil; one from Scotty, one from her mother, a postcard from Jeff. That was all.

Stunned, she went through them again, making sure that nothing had gotten stuck together or overlooked. She glanced toward the door, wondering if possibly she could have dropped it. And then she looked at Melissa, who was watching her with an odd expression.

"There's nothing here," said Jean. The words stuck in her throat and rasped as she forced them through. "Did you — "

Melissa nodded. "Here's a formal job, stiff as a wedding invitation, advising me that I'm invited to join Key Club. Well — they can just take it and kick it around, if they want to. The idea — thinking they can pledge me and not my roommate!"

She flung the precious envelope across the room where it

lighted on the window sill.

Jean pulled herself together. " Hey, Melissa, now wait! Don't be like that. You wanted to join Key Club as much as I did. No use penalizing yourself just because I took the president's man away from her." She twisted her lips into a smile as she spoke. " I should have known all along," she whispered. " Sis was trying to warn me a week ago, and I didn't catch on. But I was so sure that twenty girls wouldn't support Pamela! "

Melissa picked up her invitation and threw it on the desk.

" Let me look at it," said Jean. " I'll get used to the idea in a minute. It was just that I'd gotten used to the other idea — and it takes a little time to switch over." She pulled out Melissa's invitation and read it carefully. " Here," she thrust it at Melissa. " You're going to pledge this noon in about five minutes. Now, don't talk about being heroic on my account. You don't even like Phil, anyway. No reason why you should throw yourself away because of him. If you liked him it would be different. Go ahead, Melissa. You'll get ribbons and a white carnation to wear, and all the girls will sing songs, and it will be real gay. But I don't think I'll eat lunch today. I'm not hungry any more."

" Neither am I," Melissa said, tearing the invitation into small bits.

" Melissa! " cried Jean. " You jughead! It won't help me one bit for you to stay out. Anyway, I want to be alone. Now, scat — beat it — run, or you're going to be late. *Please,* Melissa! "

Melissa turned toward the door, slowly.

" I've got business in the dining hall," she said carelessly, " and I'm getting hungry after all. But I'll see you later, Jean — "

She looked as if she hated to leave, and Jean felt almost at the end of her endurance.

" Will you get going before you miss the whole show? "

She pushed Melissa to the door, blew her a kiss as she closed

the door after her, and sank against it trembling.

She wanted badly to talk to someone who could comfort her after this blow, cheer her up, get her straightened out. It wasn't as important as it seemed, she kept saying to herself. But she needed someone else to tell her, to make it seem true. She thought of Phil, but he was not the one she wanted just now. He thought too much of Key Club, he had counted too heavily on her making the club.

No, she shook her head and tears filled her eyes in spite of herself. The one she wanted to see right this minute was Scotty.

And at that thought she threw herself on the bed and wept.

[14]

SHE FELT AS IF SHE COULD NEVER FACE THE CAMPUS AGAIN, AND she knew that was foolish. You can't run away from defeat, she told herself. But she was unused to defeat, and it was bitter.

She sponged her face with hot and cold water, thinking through the noon hour about what people would say, how Pamela would laugh at her, how sure she had been — and how mistaken! She was hungry now, and rummaging in Melissa's desk drawer she found a candy bar. She put a dime in its place, in case she forgot to mention it to Melissa, and that reminded her that she owed Melissa thirty dollars. Fifteen hours of practicing with Rose, she thought drearily. It was another sense of failure that she overspent her allowance as she had.

She couldn't ask her family for any more money than they had allowed her, and she was lucky to be able to earn the money she needed. But she didn't want Phil to know she needed to earn, she thought. Sometimes she wondered why it mattered, and found that she could not explain the reason: all she knew was that she had a conviction as deep as instinct that Phil's attitude toward her might change, if he thought she was the kind of hard-working student who had to earn expenses. She didn't even try to justify that feeling; she only recognized it and determined not to run counter to it.

Phil. She wondered how this rejection by Key Club would affect his feeling, and she told herself that if his attention depended on her pledging any special club it wasn't worth having. Only she knew that if she lost him on account of Key Club it would be the last straw.

She wanted to see him, but she was determined to wait until he looked for her. And then she began to wish impatiently that Melissa would come back and tell her how the noon hour had gone.

Melissa walked in five minutes later with a martial light in her eye. Jean looked for the carnation and pledge ribbons.

"Where are your ribbons?" she demanded.

"Who said I was pledging?" Melissa asked coolly.

"But I thought — as long as you went to the dining room —" said Jean.

"I had business to do, and I did it," Melissa stated.

"What happened?"

"The Key Club girls and their pledges were all at the big center table," said Melissa grimly. "And there must have been over sixty — all looking smug. They saw me come in, and waved. So I stood in the center of the dining room and said: 'But I'm not pledging, girls. Jean and I prefer to be independent!' You should have seen their faces: Pamela looked as if she'd like to bite someone. So I went over to the other table with flowers and ribbons, where the unpledged girls were celebrating freedom, and we celebrated — we sang louder and oftener than the club girls, we toasted everyone on campus who has done anything at all. We even toasted Key Club girls, which embarrassed them, I think. We were excessively polite and complimentary — and we took up so much time that the Key Club girls were in the shade the whole noon hour. They looked definitely put out by the time the hour was over."

Jean stared at her. "But Melissa — You shouldn't have done that. You could have joined — I didn't mind."

"Who wants to join an outfit like that?" Melissa demanded scornfully. "If you were in, that would be different. As it is, I'd rather be out. And I'm going to take the lead in the talent show in May too — just to show them that membership means nothing."

She tossed her head and marched to her desk and sat down.

"What does Johnny think about it?" Jean asked.

"Johnny thinks the whole thing is hysterically funny," Melissa smiled. "He'll back me up. He says he'll swing the Wranglers to support me for the lead, if he can."

Suddenly the whole episode faded in importance — except for Phil's reaction. Jean hoped she would see him before the afternoon was over. Melissa was wonderful, she thought fondly, wondering with a qualm of self-doubt if she would have acted the same way. Then she remembered the Nightingales. She'd done it once too, she thought, hugging Melissa.

She walked over to the *Envoy* office at one, just in case Phil might be there. He was not, and she thought the staff looked at her pityingly, and that was unnerving. She was thankful that she was meeting Rose for a practice hour. Bach could take her mind off herself more effectively than anything else she knew.

By the end of the hour she had forgotten her uncertainty about Phil and was filled with the contentment that only Bach could give her.

"This accompanying gives me more satisfaction than anything else I do," she said to Rose.

Rose smiled with the rare pleasure that was so unexpectedly warming.

"You're doing better than I ever expected," she said. "Can you give me two hours tomorrow? Three to five? We ought to

work longer than one hour at a time."

Jean hesitated. She tried to be free daily at four, just in case Phil wanted to see her at that time. But now that she was working with Rose on a professional basis, she could not refuse the time that Rose set very often. Rose had implied once that unless Jean could practice when she wanted her, Rose would be compelled to find someone who could. And with her debts staring her in the face, Jean could not afford to refuse.

"All right," she said, "I'll be here tomorrow — three to five."

She walked toward the library, still thinking about Bach, about Rose's conservative praise, about earning the money she needed. And then on the steps she saw Phil. He looked as if he had been waiting for her, and he came to meet her.

"I'm pretty upset about this Key Club thing," he said at once. "What it comes down to, I guess, is Pamela's being mad at me and taking it out on you."

"That's all right," said Jean. There didn't seem to be much else to say.

Phil was frowning. "If it weren't so important — "

"Why is it so important? " she asked him, surprised to find that she meant it. "It doesn't bother me. Really."

He looked at her doubtfully. "It doesn't bother me if it doesn't mean anything to you," he said at last. "Come on over to the Snack Bar and have a cup of coffee."

It wasn't going to make any difference, Jean told herself, that she hadn't pledged Key Club. Phil was angry about her not receiving an invitation, and she realized, unwillingly, that the mainspring of his indignation was the feeling that perhaps his influence was not as powerful as he had assumed. She told herself that he was sweet to want to use his influence on her behalf, and it was significant that his failure frustrated him so much.

"The Spring Formal is March 27," he said, as if he were plan-

ning retaliation, or perhaps he wanted to comfort Jean. "We'll go, of course."

She loved the way he took for granted that they always went to major dances together. She clung to a comforting conviction that when she wasn't with him he wasn't going anywhere.

"That's five weeks from now," she counted.

"Don't you make dates that far ahead?" he teased her.

"Depends on the date," she told him. "I'm making this one."

"Let's make one for tomorrow, while we're about it," he said. "Same time, same station—"

She shook her head. "I'd love it, Phil, but I'm tied up at this time tomorrow."

"Oh, come on—you can't be as busy as all that. Not when I want to buy you coffee and sit and look at you."

His dark eyes were persuasive, and his voice was warm. Jean's heart seemed to melt within her.

"I promised Rose that I'd work with her tomorrow from three to five," she said, wishing that she hadn't.

"That fiddler!" He was annoyed, as if he disliked the rivalry even of music. "Tell her you can't make it—something came up."

"I can't, Phil. I—just can't—"

The humor died out of his eyes, and his voice became cold.

"But I want to see you, Jean. What's the angle? Why can't you change a date with a girl?"

She shook her head. She couldn't tell Phil that she needed the money and had to keep a job.

"I'm terribly sorry, Phil. Can't we make it at five?"

"If you can't meet me when I ask you, let's just skip it."

He rose and stalked angrily toward the cashier's desk, and Jean followed, unhappy and torn. He walked with her, silent

and aloof, toward the avenue leading up to the library.

"If you're so busy, I might as well go on and study," he said. "So long."

He turned and strode toward the library, and she walked back to Houghton House alone, struggling between disappointment over having to refuse him and anger at his attitude. For the rest of the evening, in spite of her determination, she found herself unable to study, unable to concentrate, waiting for the telephone to ring. Because surely he wouldn't stay mad.

He had asked her for the Spring Formal, she reminded herself. He couldn't stay angry. By eight o'clock she wanted to call him, and she resisted the impulse only because she wasn't sure whether it would make the situation better or worse.

She wanted to talk to Melissa about it, but Melissa was involved in troubles of her own, and seemed unaware of Jean's unhappiness.

"How's Johnny these days?" Jean asked, at nine o'clock, feeling that hearing about someone else's troubles would lighten her own.

Melissa looked up from her typewriter.

"Johnny?" she said, holding down the shift key and striking a line across the page under a quotation. Then she dropped her hands and faced Jean. "I don't know what I'm going to do about that boy."

"So? What's wrong?"

"Didn't I tell you? He hasn't made up his mind yet what he's going to major in — he likes languages, he thinks about law, he wants to write, he's good at math. Last fall he said he was a math major, and now he thinks he'll switch to languages. When I ask what he is going to do when he graduates, he laughs and says, 'The Navy, what else?' I said yesterday: 'But,

Johnny, you'll be out of the Navy in two years, and you'll have to earn a living. You ought to decide on something.' And what did he say?"

"What did he say?"

"He said"—Melissa leaned forward and slapped the table for emphasis—"'You know what I'm going to do? I'm going around the world on a freighter for two years, and write the great American novel!'"

"How casual!" said Jean, fascinated. "I mean, don't you think it would be fun just to loaf around the world like that?"

"No, I don't," Melissa was emphatic. "I think he should settle down and get ready for a career."

"Are you going to be in it?" Jean asked mischievously.

"Me? Not on your life," said Melissa positively. "He's never going to have any money anyway—I should get mixed up with a life like that? . . . But, oh, Jean, he's so sweet! I just love that boy!"

"Phil's going to be in his father's real estate business," Jean remembered aloud. It was comforting to mention Phil as if there had been no quarrel.

Melissa looked at her thoughtfully. "They say Pamela still has his pin," she remarked.

Jean froze. "I wouldn't know," she said coldly. "He never mentions Pamela to me. And he's taking me to the Spring Formal."

Melissa smiled congratulations. "I don't trust his intentions, but you're doing all right, I guess. That dance is five weeks away. Now if you can get his pin—"

"I don't even know that I want it," said Jean, trying to convince herself that she was still independent. "I'll get it when I'm ready."

She wondered afterward what made her say things like that.

She felt as if she had undertaken a commitment, as if it were becoming important to get Phil's pin so she could show all the girls that he really cared. She had better make up that quarrel, she thought wistfully. It always seemed to be her responsibility to make it up.

Tuesday morning he was not at the *Envoy* office and she did not ask for him, wanting to conceal the fact that she was searching for him. One of the boys said: "Looking for Phil? He's working on the Yearbook this morning."

"That's all right," she smiled, "I just came in for an assignment." She didn't know whether they believed her or not.

She worked with Rose, as she had promised, from three to five, and told her that she didn't think she could work more than one hour a day after that.

"I'd rather have two hours three times a week than one hour every day," said Rose stubbornly. "Otherwise just when we're both getting warmed up the time is over. How about Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from three to five? That way, you're free Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday."

"Isn't there any other time than late afternoon? I've got a practice room from ten to twelve daily."

"I can't make it. I've got a lesson twice a week at ten thirty, and the other days I've got history of music at ten."

There was no choice, and Jean recognized it.

"All right, then," she said a little bitterly. It seemed ironic that with what seemed more time than she had had in high school, still she had to arrange something like this at the worst possible time of day.

Phil was at the *Envoy* office on Wednesday morning at ten, and he acted as if he were glad to see her. When he suggested coffee, she cut her practice hour, telling herself that they had to straighten out this business of her being tied up from three to

five three days a week.

Over the coffee he watched her shrewdly, and suddenly she knew with feminine instinct that not going with him two days before had aroused a new kind of interest.

"How's the virtuoso?" he asked.

Jean leaned forward, her arms on the table. "She's really terrific, Phil. I might as well tell you we've got to work together for the next couple of months on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays till five — we're getting ready for a recital in May."

He grinned at her. "You mean I'm off your list for those days?"

She smiled back, determined not to get angry. "Now, Phil, be nice about this. There's no other time, and we've got to practice."

He shrugged. "O.K. — what's all the argument about? I'm not asking you for all those days."

"I just wanted you to know."

She wondered with some exasperation why she cared for him at all, when he always managed to make her so uncomfortable in a discussion. And then, as if he had achieved the reaction he wanted, he dropped his disinterested manner.

"I guess I was just disappointed on Monday. I didn't intend to get mad about it. Let's just forget it, shall we? Come on and walk down by the river."

She was happy again, and for the next couple of weeks everything moved along serenely. She heard from him almost every night, they went out every Saturday night, he took her to movies in town on Friday, and he met her on Tuesdays and Thursdays at four with the regularity of a standing date. She could almost feel secure in his affection. Almost but not quite. Because for some reason a delicate tension was growing up in their relationship that seemed to explode without warning into quarrels and

misunderstandings.

The worst quarrel developed two weeks before the Spring Formal, and she never did understand what had set it off. They had a movie date for Friday night, and a spring rain had set in, pouring down in a drenching cloudburst just as Phil arrived at Houghton House to call for Jean. He had gotten wet on his way over, and said gloomily that if the rain didn't stop within ten minutes they would be too late for the movie.

They had to wait in the living room of Houghton House, where girls played ping-pong in the sunroom, a couple of others played duets on the piano, a foursome had begun a bridge game. Jean didn't mind waiting, happy to be with Phil, regardless of the weather.

Phil looked around impatiently. "Anything I loathe, it's being trapped in a girls' dorm like this," he muttered.

"Well, it's too late to walk to town now, anyway," Phil said, when the rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun. The campus clock was striking eight and puddles gleamed undisturbed in the light of the windows. "Might as well go over to Rec Hall and look at television."

On the way across campus he had stepped in a puddle up to his ankle, which infuriated him. Jean was becoming impatient with his ill-humor and by the time he took her home again she had become cool and reserved, telling herself there was no excuse for his acting the way he did. When he wanted to be caressed and petted into good humor, she told him she didn't feel very loving tonight.

"Let me know when you do," he told her angrily. "We don't seem to have much fun together any more, do we?"

She faced him steadily. "No, we don't," she agreed.

"Well," he stood stood stiffly apart from her, "when you feel friendly again let me know. I'm not going to waste any

more time this way."

She watched him walk away, angry as he was. And then the memory of other evenings swept across her and she wanted to cry. She went slowly up to her room, head drooping, thinking hard. He would get over this, she told herself. She would find a way, some way, any way, to prevent another quarrel. She comforted herself with quotations about the path of true love, and assured herself that theirs must indeed be true since the path was so thorny.

Spring was early that year, and the campus was glowing with new life, framed in dark branches against a bright sky. Forsythia and scilla bloomed in unexpected corners, and a carpet of purple and yellow crocus had appeared in the night. The days were balmy and bright, and Jean found herself drawing comfort from the beauty around her, at the same time that she missed Phil more deeply because of it. This time she was not going to take the first step toward making up, she determined.

And then on Friday morning, the week before the dance, at ten o'clock Phil met her at the door of the gym as she came out of her class.

"I hoped I'd find you this morning," he said, as if nothing had happened. "Come on down to the river with me. I've got to talk to you."

She bit back the words that came automatically to her lips, "I've got to practice," and said, "O Phil, I've missed you so."

He took her arm and turned her into the path that led to the river.

"I want you to see the sun on the river," he said.

Sitting on the bluff overlooking the river in the golden morning, listening to Phil's sweet words, she thought, This is what heaven must be like. He told her he had never felt like this about a girl before; he told her he wanted to see her as much as

possible before spring vacation; he told her everything except that he loved her. But wasn't it all the same thing? And he didn't mention his pin. The thought pricked at Jean's mind like an imbedded splinter.

"The dance is one week away," he said softly. "The last big dance — we'll make it the best date of the year."

He kissed her under the bright blue sky at ten o'clock in the morning, and she thought: This is final, this is sure. Because he came back by himself. I never need to worry again.

[15]

SPRING CAME ON IN A RUSH. THE CAMPUS WAS A MIST OF NEW green leaves overhead, in every corner bushes bloomed pink and lush, violets and daffodils starred the meadows and nodded along the paths and under the trees, and everywhere like small trumpet notes were the early scarlet tulips. The air smelled of spring, of quick, moist growth, and the grass was thick and green.

The week before the dance was summery warm, and the girls wore cotton dresses to classes, with light, bright sweaters. Clouds chased each other across a brilliant sky, now white and pearly, now black as opals pausing for a quick spring shower. And every distance was rosy-hued with the pinky-purple froth of redbuds blooming.

Jean bought a new formal for the dance, using almost all the money she had earned working with Rose, after she had repaid Melissa. But this was imperative, she told herself. She had worn all her other formals on dates with Phil, and for this last big important dance she had to be glamorous.

They spent some of the early part of the evening with Melissa and Johnny Herron, although neither Phil nor Johnny wanted to trade dances. After the intermission, Melissa and Johnny disappeared, and Jean didn't see them again. Melissa had been gay and teasing with Johnny, and Jean wondered, as the evening

went on, if they might not have something to announce by the time the evening was over.

That made her think of Phil's pin, and she told herself that whether he asked her to wear it tonight or not was unimportant, there was so much time ahead.

"Let's have a whole day together," he said, as they walked back to the dorm after the dance. "I'll get the folks' car, and we'll take a ride down into Kentucky. It's only a couple of hours from here, and the mountains are beautiful in spring. Did you ever see the Kentucky mountains?"

"Never," said Jean, thinking how glorious to see them for the first time with Phil. "When?"

"How about next Saturday, the first day of vacation? Could you stay over till Sunday?"

"Oh, sure," she said easily. "Oh, Phil, it will be a wonderful day!"

"It has to be," he promised, kissing her.

That would be the day he would give her his pin, she thought, as she climbed the stairs with stars in her eyes. He had been so sweet tonight. He must have something special in mind for an all-day date.

When she opened the door of her room, Melissa was already there, sitting in the dark by the window, and Jean remembered her hopes for Melissa's happiness.

"Hi," she said gaily, switching on the light.

Melissa squinted in the light, and covered her eyes, and Jean turned it off again.

"Do you mind undressing in the dark?" Melissa asked.

"Not at all."

There was freedom in the darkness, a sense of being unrestrained and frank, and Jean knew that Melissa wanted to talk.

"How was Johnny?" Jean asked.

Melissa was staring out of the window where the big silver moon hung low in the west.

"We broke up tonight."

"Oh, Melissa, no! What happened?"

Jean in her pajamas sat down on the rug beside Melissa and clasped her arms about her knees, watching the dying moon. Melissa talked in a low voice as if she were trying to explain things to herself as she talked.

"He wanted me to marry him," she said.

"But I thought you'd decided he was The One."

"I had," Melissa's voice was husky. "Sometimes I'd tell myself I was foolish — but there never was a boy like Johnny."

"What's the difficulty, then?"

"He's going in the Navy next summer," said Melissa with a note of bitterness. "He doesn't even want to finish school, he's so anxious to run around and see the world. And he hasn't got any plan for making a living. None at all. He says we'll ship on a freighter and cruise around for another couple of years after he's out of the Navy, while he's making up his mind. I couldn't face it."

Jean thought of sailing on a freighter with Phil for two or three years. She could ask for nothing more, she thought.

"But if you love him," she said, "wouldn't you want to do that?"

Melissa shook her head violently. "I don't think people should plan to get married without any idea of how to make a living," she said. "I told him that, and he said things would work out. He's so — so *juvenile* — about life! He says he could earn his passage on the freighter; he talks about shoveling coal and heaving freight and loading cargo. And what would I be doing when he was loading freight? What it amounts to is that he doesn't want to settle down, and how do I know he ever

would? It's just no good."

Melissa didn't know what love was, Jean thought a little scornfully. So she couldn't be too unhappy about Johnny. Now if Phil were to suggest a life of adventure like that —

"Honey, it's awfully late," she said, getting to her feet. "Let's go to bed. These things do work out."

Melissa shook her head. "It's all off. I told him there was no use seeing each other any more. I'll find another man and forget all about him." She sprang lightly to her feet and stretched. "Off with the old and on with the new," she said cheerfully.

Jean wondered how she could lose her love so carelessly.

"I met a new man tonight," Melissa said, as she climbed into bed. "Ronny Graham — he's got real possibilities, and I'm seeing him tomorrow. I've got a week to work on him before vacation — "

One more week until Saturday, Jean thought. She wrote her family that she was not coming in until Sunday, and then she dreamed daily about the Saturday date: an intimate luncheon alone in a pretty dining room, or an old farmhouse, or a picnic lunch beside a stream. The long, beautiful ride, the things they would talk about. Dinner somewhere on the road. Before they returned he would ask her to take his pin; he might ask her to marry him. The dreams were rosy, high-flown, impossible. But they were delightful, and she indulged herself, feeling subconsciously that the whole thing seemed unreal.

In spite of all the dreams and plans, she was not really surprised when he told her Friday afternoon that they couldn't have their day on Saturday after all.

"Oh, Phil, I'm so sorry. What happened? Tell me the worst."

"My draft board finally caught up with me."

"But they couldn't," she cried, immediately fearful. "You can finish college, can't you? "

He shrugged. "I don't know what they've got in mind. I got a letter from the folks this morning. Dad said he guesses I'd better get home tomorrow and see them right away. Maybe I can get deferred till June — but tomorrow is the deadline for any appeal."

"So we can't drive to Kentucky," she said and was surprised to hear herself sounding even more disappointed than she felt.

"Not this week end," he said, pulling himself up from his slumping position. "I'll settle this thing tomorrow with the draft board and when I come back we can go the next week end."

"It's a date," she agreed, trying to sound gay and sure about it. He said nothing more.

They sat by the river for a few minutes, and all the scent of spring quickened around them. He was leaving for home tonight, at six thirty.

"Will you miss me?" he asked as he kissed her good-by.

"Well — probably," she said, trying to keep it light. "Will you write and tell me what happens?"

"I'll write," he promised.

"It's only a little over a week," she comforted herself, as she went back to the dorm, tired and dispirited. She would catch the ten o'clock train home tomorrow after all.

All the way home she thought about Phil, wondering how he was getting along with his draft board, how soon she would hear from him, counting the days until next Sunday when she would come back again.

Her family did not mention him, and she was grateful for that, hoping they thought she had forgotten him. She wrote him immediately when she got home and sent it off special delivery. They had a date for the first Saturday after vacation, she told herself, hugging the thought for comfort.

After that first letter went off there was nothing to do but wait. Scotty had driven down to Florida with one of his fraternity brothers the day before Jean got home. It was strange how forlorn she felt when she realized that she would not see him until the following Saturday, just before she went back. She told herself it was a good thing he wasn't around: it left the situation uncomplicated. But no matter how she reasoned about it, she felt blue and forsaken most of the week. And there was no letter from Phil.

She played the piano; she accompanied Betsy, whose progress on her violin astounded Jean; she went out to visit the high school, whose vacation came a week later, and was surprised anew to find how long ago that high school life now seemed.

She met some of the girls for lunch, and they talked about summer jobs. Joyce had applied for a position in a Y.M.C.A. camp in Yosemite, and was most enthusiastic about the idea. In an access of boredom with this week's vacation, Jean determined to do something about a summer job, and sent off a letter applying for a similar position in the Y camp in Estes Park. If something better turned up, she thought, she could always change her mind. But she didn't want to face a summer at home. Her mother agreed that it would be a good change for her.

She mailed that letter, and then felt that she was just marking time now until the week should be gone. She hated to see it go without a glimpse of Scotty. She told herself she was merely interested in what he was doing these days because she had known him for so long. But the thought of going back to school, anxious as she was to get back, without seeing him at all left a dissatisfied kind of ache that she tried not to notice.

He came in Saturday night around eight thirty, when Jean was playing the piano in a nostalgic mood. She smiled up at him as her heart beat suddenly fast, and went on playing. He

came over and leaned on the piano.

"Sounds good," he said critically.

"The tuner came the week after I went back to school at Christmas," she said. "I couldn't bear to play it then, the way it sounded."

"I just thought I'd come over and listen for a minute," he said. "I just got back this afternoon at four and it's the last chance I'll get to hear you play for a long time."

She finished the piece she was playing. "Why so long? Won't you be around this summer?"

He sat down on the bench beside her and picked out "You Brought a New Kind of Love to Me," on the treble keys. Watching his fingers, she began playing the bass chords softly.

"I'm going abroad," he said as he played.

"Scotty!" she ended the harmony with a crashing chord and turned toward him. "How utterly wonderful! When did this come up?"

"Dad thinks it would be a good experience," he kept fooling with the piano keys, not looking at Jean. "He says college means twice as much after a trip to Europe, and he wants me to have it between junior and senior years. I'm leaving the minute the last exam is over and not getting back until after Labor Day."

"When is your last exam?"

"Thursday, June 10, in the afternoon. I'm leaving Sherwood Friday morning by plane and flying from New York Saturday noon, June 12."

"You've always wanted to travel, haven't you?"

"More than anything," he said. "This looks like a pretty good deal." His voice grew enthusiastic. "I'll fly to Paris and take a bus trip through France and Switzerland. Then spend some time in Italy and Germany, getting the feeling of the

political situations there. I'd like to go to Spain, but I don't know if I can make it."

"I wish I were going with you," Jean said spontaneously. "I've wanted to go to Europe ever since I can remember."

She looked up to find his eyes on her, and at his expression she became warm and confused, and began picking out chords on the piano again.

"How's your boy friend down at college?" Scotty asked casually.

"Oh, he's just fine," she said brightly. "He got a notice from his draft board last week and he hopes he can get deferred until graduation. They always let you finish college, don't they?"

"Usually," said Scotty. "At least at this time of year — did he come up to Chicago this week?"

"Not this time," Jean said with a sigh. "Vacation was so much shorter than Christmas — he couldn't take the time."

"Well," said Scotty, "I suppose it's all for the best. You're young still, but — Oh, well — "

"Anyway, I hope you have a wonderful summer," she said, not looking at him. "I suppose I won't even see you off. Our exams are likely to be later than yours."

He nodded, carefully matter-of-fact.

"Well, I thought I'd say hello while I had a chance," he stood up prepared to go. "You go back tomorrow, don't you? So this is it, until fall."

Fall sounded a dreary length of time away. She thought of the job in Estes and hoped passionately it would come through.

"So long," he said at the door. "Maybe I'll send you a postcard from Paris. Ah, Paris! Oo-la-la!"

He kissed his finger tips to her with a wicked grin and ran down the steps. She closed the door and went back to the piano, wishing she understood herself better.

[16]

TRYOUTS FOR THE OVERTON TALENT SHOW WERE SCHEDULED FOR Monday and Tuesday after the students returned from vacation. This was an original variety show, organized and produced by the Masque Club. This year it was titled — significantly, Jean felt — *Where Do We Go from Here?*

Melissa urged Jean to try out, after the first day's auditions.

"They've got a wonderful chorus number, Jean. Why don't you go over with me? They've even got a comedy act, with Rose playing her violin in appropriate sound effects."

"Rose? In a comedy act? Sounds impossible."

Melissa laughed. "It does too. You never heard the kind of sounds she can produce. She does it all with a dead pan — it's hysterical."

"I couldn't manage it this year," Jean shook her head. "Between studying and practicing and exams, I've got my hands full."

She wondered if Johnny Herron would be in it, and didn't dare ask. Melissa had not mentioned his name since the night she had told Jean they had broken up.

"Is Ronny in it?" Jean asked.

Melissa nodded indifferently. "He's really not very good, but they let him in the men's chorus."

Tuesday night Melissa announced with satisfaction that she had gotten the part she wanted, defeating Key Club's best talent for it.

"That takes care of Key Club," she said, dusting her hands efficiently together. "They were sunk. They never thought it could happen to them. Now I can forget about them."

Jean was surprised that Melissa could have held her grudge against Key Club for so long. She herself had forgotten long ago that she had ever cared. She had too many other things on her mind.

She wished later that she were in *Where Do We Go from Here?* It would have filled those empty crevices of time that she had kept for Phil. Because he had not called since her return on Sunday afternoon.

By Wednesday night she began to worry. They had a date for Saturday, she kept telling herself. With an effort of will she studied and practiced at scheduled hours; spent more time than she had planned working with Rose, whose recital was only two weeks away; told herself that Phil was so busy with the Yearbook that he didn't have a moment to spare. She knew from Melissa that he was not in the talent show.

By Thursday morning she was driven by anxiety. She went over to the *Envoy* office at ten because she had to see him if she could.

Typewriters were chattering, editors were comparing notes, Phil was looking at headlines, glancing over the dummy, suggesting which paragraph could come out to make space, holding one article for the next issue, doing all the things he was usually doing when she came into the office.

He looked up when she came in. "Hi, Jean, just what we need. Have you got a story on the tryouts for *Where Do We Go from Here?*"

"Was I supposed to write them up?"

"Fay said she was going to give you the assignment."

"I never heard about it."

He exploded in a shattering burst of anger at someone's stupidity in missing one of the most important stories of the week, and Jean winced.

"I can probably get it all from Melissa," she said. "Shall I bring it in tomorrow?"

"If you can get it, that will be fine."

She waited, hoping he would say, "Stick around, Jean, we need you this morning." She had a practice hour, but she could have argued a little, felt needed.

But he said nothing, and she began to feel in the way.

"Well — I'll be going." She had to know about Saturday, she thought, and she added, as casually as possible, "Will I see you this week end?"

She hoped he would say, "Why wait for the week end?" or at least, "I'll be talking to you."

But he said only: "O.K., then. Do a good job on those auditions," and she realized that he had no intention of answering her question.

Pamela was standing near the desk of one of the copy editors, and she looked at Jean as if she were a stranger. Jean went on her way reluctantly, telling herself that of course Pamela was the reason why Phil was so offhand this morning.

He didn't call Thursday night, and she tried to tell herself he was too busy on the Yearbook to have a date that night. But after his farewell two weeks ago, after the vacation separation, shouldn't this first week end be important?

She spent the evening writing out the notes Melissa had given her on the Talent Show auditions. Johnny was not in the show, she discovered. When she took them in to the office on Friday

morning, Phil was nowhere to be seen.

"Is Phil around?" she asked the copy editor.

Phil's co-editor shook his head without looking up.

"He hasn't been in this morning," he said brusquely. "Didn't say when he'd be here."

But he was working on the Yearbook too, Jean reminded herself. He was terribly busy these last weeks of school. Of course. Terribly busy. The excuse went around and around in her mind like a scratchy record. But what about tomorrow?

She struggled with her pride, tried to hold on to her independence. But it was no use. Melissa was busy in rehearsals; even Rose had no time to practice today. Jean went out and roamed about the campus, loitering near every spot where Phil might be in class, walking through the library, sitting in the rose garden. Warm, sweet spring wrung her heart and left her feeling that she had never been lonely before.

Melissa was dressing for a date that evening, moving about the room in concentrated silence as if she didn't notice Jean sitting motionless and despondent by the window.

"Who is it tonight?" Jean asked to break the silence.

"Ronny Graham. He wants me to take his pin, and I think I may."

"Millions of dollars, I suppose."

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact. His father is a steel executive in Pittsburgh, and Ron has got all the money he can use."

Jean wished she could plan her future as effectively as Melissa seemed to. But she couldn't even plan the dull evening ahead of her. She had counted on Phil right up to now, and now she knew that was futile.

"You ought to go over to Rec Hall," said Melissa, looking at her sharply.

"Me? Why?"

"Just to get your mind off your troubles," Melissa sounded impatient. "Go out, act as if you didn't know the difference — get another man — anyway, don't sit here alone brooding about someone like Phil. Where's your pride?"

"Pride? What's that?"

"It's what you need with a man," Melissa said emphatically. "It's what carries you through when nothing else is any good. Come on, Jean," her voice softened, "I hate to leave you here alone. Why don't you go with us?"

"On your date?" Jean was incredulous. "I wouldn't think of it, thanks just the same. I've got a good book."

He would surely call tonight, and she didn't want to miss the call. They had a date for tomorrow, didn't they? For all day tomorrow?

At eight o'clock she could stand the silence no longer and called the Wrangler House. A deep voice answered at the other end: Kenny Williams. Jean recognized him, and hoped he wouldn't know her.

"Is Phil Stewart there?"

"He isn't in tonight. Any message?"

"No — I guess not. Do you know if he'll be in — tomorrow?"

"He said he was going to be pretty busy all day tomorrow."

"Thank you."

She hung up, trying to decide what Kenny meant. Phil was going to be busy all day tomorrow. That could mean he was going to be with her. Couldn't it?

At ten thirty she went to bed with the question still unanswered.

When she awoke Saturday morning, she knew that hope was gone, and she turned over and closed her eyes again, trying not to face it.

" Aren't you getting up today? " Melissa inquired, preparing to leave for breakfast.

" I've got a headache," said Jean. " I'll get up later."

" You'll make yourself sick if you carry on this way."

" What way? " Jean opened her eyes wearily.

" Moping about Phil like this. Don't you suppose Pamela and all her friends are watching everything you do? I never thought you'd act like this, Jean — just because Phil hasn't called for a week."

" You don't know anything about it," Jean closed her eyes again and turned to the wall. Melissa went out, slamming the door behind her.

By midmorning Jean had regained enough spirit to rise and make a plan for the day. She had missed breakfast in the dining hall so she went to the Snack Bar for coffee and a sweet roll, and the first person she saw was Phil, sitting alone.

She stopped involuntarily when she saw him, and then walked steadily across the floor and sat down at another table. Although she carefully kept her eyes away from him, she knew every motion he made, the instant he drained his coffee cup, the way he smudged out his cigarette, the languid air with which he stood up. She stirred her own coffee with a feeling of detachment.

He stopped beside her table and leaned over a little.

" Hi, Jean, how're things? "

" Just fine." She watched the circles in her coffee cup that she was making with her spoon.

" Have a nice vacation? "

" Wonderful. And you? "

" Very good. Cleared up lots of problems."

She glanced up then. " Draft board co-operative? I thought I might hear from you."

"Accommodating," he said with a half-smile. "They gave me until June 20 to report."

She leaned her head on her hand and smiled, carefully bright.

"I suppose you're going to have lots of things to clean up before you go in the Army."

"Yep — lots of detail work." He stood up, looking business-like and efficient. "Too bad we can't do everything we'd like to," he said. She wondered if he were explaining thus obliquely his ignoring the date he had made before vacation. "These last few weeks are going to be rugged."

This was aimless conversation, she thought, breaking off a piece of sweet roll and eating it. It was dry in her mouth and she had difficulty swallowing it. She wanted to say, "Why haven't you called?" She wanted to say, "Didn't we have a date for today?" But she held the words back, hoping he would say something first.

"Are you going to be busy tonight?" The words came out in spite of herself. Phil looked almost embarrassed. Then he grinned reassuringly.

"Awfully busy," he said. "This time of year things pile up. Well — got to be going." He straightened up and smiled down at her in a kindly fashion. "Nice seeing you, Jean. Have fun."

He strode away with long steps, and she sat and stared at her coffee, telling herself she must drink it or she'd never get through the morning. He was going to be busy tonight.

She drained the cup quickly and found new energy. She'd make plans, she'd be busy herself. And maybe next week —

[17]

SHE HEARD THE NEWS AT FIVE O'CLOCK SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

Saturday night had not been so bad as she had feared. She had played bridge with some of the girls, looked at television, listened to the girls talk about Pamela and how she quarreled with Phil, heard about the unhappy love life of Sis Fletcher, who had broken up with her steady date during Easter vacation. Somehow the evening had worn away, and by the time she had gone to bed around midnight she had begun to think that this week was past and next week would be better.

Phil must be getting the Yearbook ready to go to press, poor darling. He had to work twenty-four hours a day on it, right at this time. She should have known, she shouldn't have wasted a minute worrying. She told Melissa when she got up on Sunday morning that everything was just fine. She had seen Phil on Saturday morning, and there wasn't a thing to worry about.

"I'm glad somebody's happy," Melissa had said morosely.

"Something wrong with your love life?"

"Oh, nothing a few million dollars wouldn't cure. Only trouble is, the wrong guy has the millions."

Jean hardly listened. In her new mood of Sunday morning, she was determined to be gay and optimistic, sure that everything was right with the world this beautiful spring. She dressed

in her Easter clothes and went to the little Episcopal church in town. In the afternoon there was a concert on campus, the last artist's concert of the season, with a violinist, and she had promised Rose she would go. She thought of the former violin concert when Phil had persuaded her to miss it and go out with him instead, and it seemed very suitable to spend this afternoon, when he was too busy to see her, listening to a violinist.

She had just returned to the dormitory after the concert and she wondered what had happened. Groups of girls clustered in the living room, talking in the low, intense tones of shock and excitement. When Jean entered they looked up and stopped talking, watching her with questioning eyes.

"What's happened?" she asked.

Sis Fletcher looked at Dotty Frank, and Dotty turned to Melissa.

"You tell her, Melissa."

Melissa looked at Jean as if she were challenging her to take a blow like a champion.

"Phil and Pamela got married last night. They drove to Indiana after their date and telephoned the dean's office this morning. They're not coming back to school."

Jean froze where she stood, feeling the eyes of the girls upon her like darts. In the first numbness of shock she thought only of hiding her feelings, taking the news well, covering up the heartbreak they were all looking for.

"How adventurous!" she drawled. "Phil was going into the Army in June—I suppose he wanted some time with his wife before then."

She turned on her heel and went upstairs, lightly and quickly, alone. No one moved. As she turned the corner at the landing, she heard the gossip breaking out again in a remote, hushed clatter.

She closed the door behind her and stood still a minute, trying to think what she wanted to do. Like an unexpected death, this news was impossible to comprehend. She moved to the window and looked out on the campus, where the low rays of the western sun slanted across the meadow. Around the hills the mists were settling, dim and dreamy in the late sunlight. Everything she saw reminded her of Phil and she stirred restlessly. She was going to die, she thought, if she ever realized that this had really happened.

Phil and Pamela. Married!

She threw herself on her bed and buried her face, fighting her pain, trying to find something to hang onto before the worst realization broke. She wanted Melissa. And then she didn't want her. She wanted only to be alone.

Downstairs she could hear the door opening, footsteps on the concrete steps, voices below her window. If she looked out again she could see the girls going to the dining hall, arm in arm, in groups of three and four. All talking, still, about this unexpected and dramatic climax to the continued story of Phil and Pamela.

She thought about Phil, then, his attention, his kisses, how sweet he had been at Christmas. Unwillingly she remembered too how he had changed during the spring and been morose, often ill-tempered.

But he had been sweet in the beginning, and she had fallen in love. Other girls had fallen in love with him — and she had been so sure it wouldn't happen to her! She remembered Melissa's reports of the other girls, and something began to stir in her mind. If she could just get used to the idea!

Slowly she began to review the times they had quarreled. Once she had thought that she might be happier if she never saw him again. But she had never been strong enough to take

the initiative in making a break. Suppose he had asked her to marry him? Would she have been fool enough to do that? Would she have been happy?

Suddenly revulsion set in, and she sat up, her eyes snapping. What a fool she had been to have thought she cared! She was glad she would never see him again.

She got off the bed, brushed her hair, cleaned her face and made it up again. She was going to walk the campus with her head up, she thought, setting her teeth. She would laugh at the joke even if it killed her. No one was going to think she had a moment's regret for Phil, or for the time she had gone with him. She would ask that nice sophomore in her theory class to go to some recitals with her and they could talk about music. Phil had never cared about music. She would write to Scotty tonight —

She remembered how Scotty had disliked Phil, and a longing for him swept over her so that she almost broke down. Then she pulled herself together. She couldn't turn to Scotty now, just because she was through with Phil. She had thought once that Scotty might be her love, and yet look how she had been distracted by someone else as soon as he was out of sight. How could you tell if you loved someone anyway? She wasn't sure she ever could tell, and with Scotty she must never make such a mistake.

She walked across to the dining hall, hurrying a little because she was late, and planning her evening.

At the door of the dining hall she hesitated. Then with her head high she walked in, smiling at the girls she knew, stopping to talk with some of the music school girls about the afternoon's concert, finally gaining her place at the table with Melissa and Dotty and Sis.

" What's to eat? " she inquired. " I'm starved."

Melissa hailed their student waitress. "May Jean have some supper? She's late and starving."

The rosy little waitress smiled at Jean reassuringly and scurried across the floor to bring her macaroni and cheese and fruit salad.

Pamela's friends at the center table glanced at Jean and she looked straight at them, smiling as if she were glad to see them. It took an effort, but she was keyed up for the effort.

"Pamela sure killed her college career," commented Sis. "No degree after three and three quarters years of work — "

"I don't suppose Phil cared, with the Army ahead of him and his father's business after that," said Dotty. "But I should think she would have considered her folks. They always wanted her to have a degree, I heard."

Eyes were on Jean again, and she had to say something.

"It was a sticky situation," she remarked. "Pamela did us a favor by taking him out of circulation."

"That's what everyone is saying," agreed Melissa. Jean felt chilled again at the idea that everyone was talking about her. She could hear the curious voices: "How is she taking it? What do you suppose she will do now? She was terribly fond of him, *I* heard. Do you suppose she'll come back next year?" She knew what they would be saying, because she had heard it said about other girls who had suffered a similar shock during the year.

She raised her head again.

"Do we have to talk about Phil?" she inquired. "I'm tired of the subject, and there doesn't seem to be anything left to say. Why don't we talk" — she groped wildly for a name — "about Johnny Herron?"

Melissa gave her a sharp dig with her elbow.

"Leave Johnny out of it, will you?" she muttered.

" O.K.," Jean amended obligingly, " let's talk about television. What's good tonight? "

Good-naturedly the girls picked up the discussion of television.

But Jean had made her big effort. She wanted to be alone again. Even telling herself that she loathed Phil and believing every word of it, still she needed time to get used to the idea that he was gone from her life.

She left the girls on their way to Recreation Hall, and went alone to the bench overlooking the river to think. Eight more weeks to get through. She didn't see how she could face the rest of the year.

[18]

MORE THAN SHE WOULD HAVE BELIEVED, JEAN FOUND RELIEF IN working with Rose. Abrupt and outspoken, Rose seemed to cut through all the excuses for wasting time and breaking hearts to the fundamental job before both of them, which was to get an education and be prepared for a full life within the next three years.

"Play the 'Romanza Andaluza,'" Jean suggested, at the close of one rehearsal. "It's my favorite piece."

She played the opening chords on the piano, and Rose drew her bow across the deep-throated G string with a full, beautiful tone. Together they played the minor Spanish harmonies, and Jean felt a stirring of deep response to the haunting melody.

"That's a gorgeous thing," she said, as the last high note died away on the E string.

"It puts love in its place, doesn't it?" Rose observed. "You know, love ought to make everything else more important instead of less."

"How right you are!"

Jean thought again of Scotty, who came to her mind frequently these days. He made music important, studying, travel, reading. Then she remembered that when she got home this summer, he wouldn't be there. Abruptly she turned back to

Bach. Where Sarasate gave her some comfort in trouble, Bach took her troubles off her mind altogether.

She knew she had reached a pitch of performance for Rose beyond anything she had cared to achieve before, and Rose was now well pleased with her work.

"We could make a team," Rose said, when they finished the Bach, and she was unstringing her bow. "Would you consider professional accompaniment for a career?"

"I don't know." Jean felt that her future lay behind a dark curtain, and three years ahead was too far to plan. The summer before her was the immediate problem.

She had not yet heard from her application for the job in Estes Park, and she was trying to think of alternatives, with little success. She didn't want to stay in Sherwood if she could help it, she wrote her mother.

"I think you need a new perspective on your college life," her mother had written back, "and a change of scene would be a good thing. If this job doesn't come through, why not try for a private camp? Sometimes they have positions open at this date."

Jean thought, reading the letter, that her mother seemed to know what had happened during the year. She was surprised constantly at the things her mother knew without being told. She had never written her family about Phil's elopement, although she had written to Scotty, reporting the event as casually as possible.

She didn't want him to think she needed him just now, but still when his letter came, sympathetic but more impersonal than she expected, she was let down and depressed.

In the same mail came an acceptance for her application for the position in Estes Park, and her spirits rebounded. There was lots of time ahead of her. Time for everything: to travel, to

play better piano, to wait for Scotty to come home from Europe, and perhaps to start over again.

On May 1, the traditional May Day celebrations were held at Overton each year. Classes were dismissed and the morning was given over to the election of a May Queen, who was always crowned at four in the afternoon.

With Phil and Pamela both gone, there seemed to be no organized effort about the elections. Girls and men talked and asked about who was going to be May Queen, but no one seemed to have any idea about special candidates, and dozens of junior girls were discussed.

At ten the balloting began. The procedure was for the students by secret ballot to write the name of their choice for queen. The girl with the most votes was named May Queen, and the next six were her attendants. In other years campus politicians had talked to enough students about special choices to influence the final result.

"Pamela was May Queen, last year," Colly Ferris remarked in a group of students, where Jean overheard him. "Phil saw to that — it was a setup. Now it's a free-for-all."

"I like this," exclaimed Dick Garner. "I know lots of girls I'd rather name than Pamela." He winked at Jean. "Does it have to be a junior?"

"Has to be a junior," Colly told him.

At noon the balloting was ended, and the junior committee began counting votes. At two they reported the results to the faculty members in charge, and to the chosen girls. And at four the student body assembled in the meadow to witness the crowning of the unknown queen and her attendants.

The queen was a tall, beautiful blond girl whom Jean had seen on campus but not become acquainted with. She was a Kittredge girl, and cheers went up from the rest of the club

when she stepped upon the dais and received the crown. Her six attendants stood around her, smiling in the sunlight, and the Overton chorus sang an ancient song of the May, while a group of dancers from the speech department performed a May-pole dance.

It was a lovely, archaic ceremony, and Jean felt something of the tie to the college that she had felt at the Home-coming celebration. At the same time she thought for the first time: I doubt if I'll see this again. I might not be here next year.

And in the meantime she worked better than ever with Rose.

The recital was scheduled for Sunday afternoon, May 2, and both girls were keyed up to concert pitch.

"I'm auditioning for a scholarship to Juilliard the week after the recital," Rose said, on their last rehearsal. "I think I might go ahead faster there than here, and I'm in a hurry. But we can keep in touch, no matter where I am."

"Let's," said Jean, weary of plans. "I'll want to know what you're doing."

The recital was attended by an unusually large audience, and the applause was spontaneously excited. Miss Chester expressed unreserved approval for Jean's performance, and Jean was pleased for Rose that it had been so successful. For herself, she felt as if she walked in a fog and everything seemed remote and unreal.

Rose paid her fifty dollars for the time they had spent together in the past month, and Jean paid her accounts in the Overton shops and calculated that with great care she would have about thirty-five dollars to take home. Less than financial success, she thought wryly, but not total failure. There seemed no reason now to buy more clothes, and it was easier to exercise thrift than it had been earlier in the year.

With the May Day week end past, the year went into the

swift momentum of winding up. When the Talent Show was produced, everyone would concentrate again on studying for examinations.

Jean wished now that she had tried out for it. She attended every rehearsal and offered to help collect, mend, and press costumes and do little jobs for the property crew, just to be part of the show, and keep busy.

All the acts were good, she thought, watching them over and over. Rose's skit was a savagely humorous attack on arty musicians. She had worked it up with another girl from the music school, and she played sentimental music with whines, quavers, and squeaks, satirizing all the affectations she had more than once derided to Jean. She ended up breaking her bow in a fit of mock heroics, as she played Hot Canary. This, of course, brought down the house. She had told Jean earlier that she was buying several old secondhand cheap bows for the purpose.

Melissa had refused to tell Jean what she was doing, advising her to see the show. Jean felt when she saw it that Melissa's act was the most outstanding in the program.

Melissa gave a monologue which she had written herself, in which a girl was being rushed by a sorority and rejected. By subtle lines and clever impersonating of half a dozen parts herself, she conveyed the idea that the sorority members were narrow, prejudiced, and snobbish, not recognizing an outstanding girl when they saw her. There was a great deal of comedy in it, and a twist of pathos at the end that left the audience feeling a shock of truth. It was not only deft, perceptive, and extremely skillful; it was also a neat revenge on the Key Club for having rejected Melissa's roommate. And it was too true to life for anyone to argue about. Every girl who heard it recognized someone she knew. The more often Jean saw the performance, the more impressed she was with Melissa's dramatic talent.

But Melissa hardly mentioned the show between rehearsals. She too seemed to be driving herself to keep going, keep busy, as if all that mattered was to reach that day in June when she could leave the campus.

Where Do We Go from Here? was given Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, May 13, 14, and 15, and was highly successful. The jokes that had begun to pall in rehearsal sounded fresh and witty in performance. Rose's satiric performance was hysterically funny. Melissa's acting surpassed anything Jean had seen her do. Jean attended every performance, feeling again as if she were part of the life of Overton. Some of the fog was disappearing.

[19]

THE LONG MEMORIAL DAY WEEK END WAS APPROACHING, AND Jean faced it with dread. She considered going home, but it would be a long trip for only three days. She would have liked to see Scotty, but now she was unsure about whether he would like to see her, and unwilling to take a chance.

She went home with Melissa for the holiday, and the Girards welcomed her as if she were part of the family.

"How is Betsy?" Cindy demanded. "I wrote to her and she answered, and I guess I haven't written again. Tell her I will, though."

Jean assured her that Betsy was just fine and longing to hear from her, and Cindy looked at her with bright, knowing eyes.

"Has she got a boy friend?" she demanded. "I've got two — one belongs to the country club and the other is a life guard at the community pool. I haven't decided which one to go steady with yet."

"They begin early, don't they?" Jean said to Melissa as they took their bags upstairs.

Melissa was alternately talkative and silently thoughtful during the week end. She talked about Ronny Graham, who was not only wealthy but had his future neatly organized, beginning in his father's office as soon as he was through with the Army.

He seemed to be exactly what Melissa had planned to find, and she discussed him dispassionately as if she recognized all the advantages of the situation. She had accepted his pin the week after the show, but she kept it carelessly tumbled in a box with a dozen pieces of costume jewelry.

"Don't let me forget to put this on when we go back to school," she said to Jean.

She talked about bright, optimistic plans for going to New York and getting a job in television. Perhaps next fall.

"Why go back to school?" she demanded. "If I've got to earn my own million dollars, I'd better get started."

"But I didn't think you had to earn your own," Jean pointed out.

Melissa shrugged. "How can you tell about anything? Sometimes I think it might be easier if I earned it myself."

The only thing she never mentioned was Johnny Herron. Jean tried to introduce the subject once or twice, and Melissa refused to discuss it. Jean suspected that her roommate cared more deeply about Johnny than she had realized. Her heart ached for her, and Melissa's unspoken trouble occupied Jean's thoughts to the exclusion of her own problems. She wished she could do something for Melissa. But as long as Melissa refused to talk about Johnny there was nothing Jean could do.

Jean saw Johnny once, after they returned to the campus. He said, "Hi, Jean," as if he were glad to see her. But he looked tired and sober, and he was too busy to talk.

Overton was beautiful. Mock orange blossoms filled the air and scented the breeze, rhododendron and laurel were glowing on the hills, and the rose garden back of the library was in full bloom. It was a quiet spot of fragrant blooms and grassy paths, with stone benches and a small fountain playing into a pool of goldfish. Jean spent quite a bit of time there in the first days of

June, studying for her exams, thinking about her freshman year, and wishing she had done things differently.

Classes were ended, students were preparing for examinations and leave-taking. The pace of the year had slowed to a quiet finale.

Jean was trying to organize her things. Her exams were late this semester, with the final exam in English falling on Thursday, June 10. Her father was driving down to bring her home on Friday.

She would miss Scotty by one day, she thought, with increasing regret. He was leaving Friday morning for Europe. She wished she could see him again before he left. But she was unwilling to risk his not caring to see her. Perhaps it was better this way. Everything was so different from what she had expected when the year had begun. And next year would be even more changed.

Rose would be gone. She had won her scholarship to Juilliard, and Jean knew she would miss her musical talent and uncompromising integrity.

Paula Chester would no longer be here. She had accepted a position Memorial Day week end with a university in Texas that offered greater challenges and opportunities than she could hope for in Overton.

Jean noticed, almost without being aware of it, that the final examinations did not present the tension and uncertainty she had felt at the end of the first semester. She was sure she had improved all her grades, although she knew she was not yet up to her high school standards. And when she took her piano exam her examiner said, with a note of surprise, "Very, very good, Miss Burnaby." Miss Chester told her, when Jean went in to say good-by, that she was probably going to get an A this semester and there would be no question about renewing her

scholarship. That was good news, Jean thought, feeling as if they were talking about someone else. She was tired, and next year seemed much too far away to think about yet. She wanted to get home.

Jean stopped the aimless picking up and putting down that she found herself doing, and stood at the window, drawn back again and again by the distant misty hills, the lush green of the campus lawns, the sheen of sun on the curving silvery river.

Below the window Melissa was sitting on the stone stoop with Ronny Graham. She was wearing a sleeveless chintz dress, crisp and bright, with a gray-and-yellow print on a white ground. Ronny stood as Johnny had stood the first time Jean had seen him, one foot up on the stoop, leaning toward Melissa, who looked up at him and then away, shaking her head. Suddenly she stood up, removed his pin from her dress, and thrust it at him with a motion of casting it away.

Jean went back to her packing with determination.

"Well, that job is finished," said Melissa, opening the door and walking across the room with great efficiency.

"You mean Ronny?" Jean turned.

"I mean Ronny." Her efficiency left her, and Melissa sat down on her bed and held her head.

"I thought I could do it, Jean. I thought, here's the boy with millions of dollars. And he's a sweet kid, actually. I'll never understand why it isn't as easy to fall in love with a million dollars as with anybody else. But I couldn't do it. I told him last night. And he pursued me all over campus today, wanting to talk about it. He wouldn't take his pin last night, but he took it now."

"Where does that leave Johnny?"

"I don't know." Melissa looked as if she were going to cry. "I'm afraid I made the biggest mistake of my life about Johnny.

I haven't seen him for weeks. And I heard yesterday that he's joining the Navy. Maybe he already has! What am I going to do now?"

She raised her head and looked at Jean in haggard despair.

"I'd call the Wrangler House and talk to him," said Jean.

Melissa dropped her head into her hands again.

"I've done that," she confessed. "I called yesterday and left a message. He never called back."

"Write a note," suggested Jean.

Melissa shook her head. "He wouldn't answer. He was terribly upset when I broke up with him. He seemed to think I was interested only in money. I didn't tell you how terrible he felt. And I didn't know then that I'd feel like this."

She threw herself on the bed and hid her face. Jean ached for her. Her own grief over Phil seemed paltry compared to this.

"Melissa, honey," she sat down and patted her roommate's shoulder, "it's going to work out all right. You'll see him before you leave and everything will be fine."

Melissa shook her head. "If I could just see him," she whispered. "I'm leaving Monday — day after tomorrow — and I can't find him — he doesn't answer — "

The lunch bell sounded and Jean stood up, thinking about risks and taking chances. If you didn't take a chance once in a while, you got nowhere.

"You go on," Melissa's voice was muffled. "I couldn't eat a thing. I just want to think."

Jean went to the telephone in the lower hall, and called the Wrangler House, asking for Johnny Herron and giving her name. To her surprise, he was in.

"Johnny?" Her heart was beating rapidly and she was a little breathless. "Could I talk to you for a few minutes privately? It's terribly important — to me."

"Sure thing." He sounded as if he were sympathetic for Jean, which was what she had hoped for. "When do you want to make it?"

"Could you snatch a sandwich and meet me in the rose garden at quarter to one? It's private during the lunch hour."

"I'll be there. Quarter to one."

"Thanks so much."

She glanced at her watch. It was twelve ten and she turned and ran back up to her room.

"Hurry," she cried to Melissa. "Wash your face and get ready. Johnny thinks he is meeting me at quarter to one in the rose garden."

Melissa sprang off the bed and began brushing her hair, trembling.

"What are you going to talk to him about?"

"I'm not going to talk to him about anything," Jean said. "You'll be there instead of me — and be thankful the rose garden is deserted at the noon hour."

Melissa dropped her brush and faced Jean.

"What do you really think, Jean? Will he speak to me?"

"I think he'll forget all about being mad when you and he are together again," said Jean, hoping she was right.

"I haven't seen him for three weeks," said Melissa, as they went downstairs. "I think he's been avoiding me. Oh, Jean, what if he's already enlisted?"

"I wouldn't worry about any of that till you see him," Jean advised. "Good luck, honey, and give me the news — whatever it is."

"I'll tell you," Melissa promised. She hesitated a moment, and turned into the path that led around the library building to the rose garden. Jean watched her go and went on to the dining hall.

"We thought you weren't eating today," said Sis, as Jean sat down at their table. "Where's Melissa?"

"I was delayed," said Jean. "Melissa's got a date."

"Who is it this time?" Dotty Frank was interested, but she went on: "I saw Johnny this morning, and he looked as if he had been tied in a knot and just untied. He said he was joining the Navy — fed up with campus life."

A thrill of anxiety went through Jean. "When was he joining up?"

"I don't know," said Dotty. "There's a Navy officer on campus this week, you know, recruiting. Johnny said he was going to look into it today. Seems a shame not to finish when he's got only one year to go."

"He always did want to see the world," Jean said. She heard them go on discussing the boys who were going into service and, inevitably, of course, coming back to Phil and Pamela.

"Pamela's coming back next year, I heard. She thinks she'll get that degree while Phil is in service," said the girl across the table. To her own surprise Jean could hear the news calmly.

"I wouldn't want to sit around college waiting for my husband to come out of the Army," said another girl with a meaning laugh. "I'd rather be free and unattached while I waited."

Jean thought of Scotty. He'd be in the Army or Navy sometime, and she was going to be waiting for him. She wanted him to know, and like a flash of light her problem was solved. She had taken a risk for Melissa. Certainly she had courage enough to take one for herself.

"Excuse me," she said abruptly. "I just remembered something terribly important. I've got to run."

She never thought of Melissa and Johnny again, as she ran back to her room and began digging through her desk drawers for the exam schedule. Scotty was leaving Friday morning. If

she could get that Thursday exam changed to an earlier section — if there were another section that didn't conflict with the rest of her schedule; if the dean and Mr. Harley would permit the change —

She found the schedule and studied it. The other section for freshman English was Monday morning, and she had no exam at that time. She snapped her fingers. She could do it — if — if — if — if —

Her fingers shook as she dialed Mr. Harley's home telephone number, and she had to start over again.

" No, he isn't here right now," the voice at the other end was faintly questioning. " Can I have him call you? He should be back within an hour."

" Thank you, this is one of his students calling. I'll call back."

She tried to call the dean of the English department. The dean had an appointment and would not be available until three. She made an appointment for three and tried Mr. Harley again, in half an hour. He had returned from the store and was working in the garden. Jean knew how her mother felt to be called to the telephone with muddy hands. But the soft, monotonous voice of his wife insisted on calling him, and Jean waited fearfully.

" Hello? Harley speaking."

" This is Jean Burnaby," she said, " I'm in one of your freshmen classes — "

" Who? Speak more slowly, please. What's the trouble? "

She drew a deep breath and compelled herself to speak slowly and distinctly.

" But I don't understand your request. You want to transfer from the Thursday exam to Monday morning — for what reason? "

Impatience beat at her nerves, and she ground her teeth,

commanding herself to be patient.

"I've got to leave Wednesday night instead of Friday morning for home. It's extremely important to get there by Thursday—"

"Hm-m-m-m—" He sounded as if the question of changing exam schedules had never arisen before. "Well, Miss Burnaby—did you say that was your name? It has to go through the dean, you know. If he is willing to accept this—irregularity—I'll O.K. it."

It was ten minutes after three and she had to run to keep her appointment with the dean. When she arrived, she had to wait. But the dean seemed to regard the situation as familiar and signed the slip that admitted her to the Monday examination section without argument.

She went back to her room and began to plan the rest of the details: study, pack, buy a ticket for Wednesday night—she had better let her mother know she was coming then. She must find cartons to hold books, radio, typewriter—no, she could carry that. She paced about the room, trying to decide what to do first.

A long distance call to Sherwood went unanswered. She went to find the campus watchman to ask his advice about packing her belongings. Mr. Bjornsen was an elderly man whose main interest in life was taking care of the campus and looking after the needs of the girls. He brought up a couple of big cartons from the basement.

"Packing already?" Mrs. Buxton inquired amiably, encountering Jean carrying the cartons to her room.

Jean nodded brightly.

"I hope we'll have you again next year," said Mrs. Buxton as if Jean had been one of her favorite girls. Jean responded to the smile, gesturing that she was too breathless to talk.

Dropping the cartons in her room, she went back to the telephone to call Sherwood again. This time Sally answered.

"Jean? What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," Jean said, suddenly weary with all the explanations she had made. "I'm changing my schedule and coming home on the train Wednesday night. I just wanted to let Mother know."

"What made you decide that?" Sally asked. "I thought the folks were coming for you on Friday."

"Well—" Jean wondered if she should be doing this after all. "My exams are earlier than I expected, and I just thought I'd like to get home. Is Mother there?"

"I don't know if anyone can meet the train Thursday morning—" Mrs. Burnaby sounded worried when she came to the telephone—"Dad has a conference at the University of Wisconsin on Wednesday and he's driving up and won't get back till Thursday noon. The car won't be here."

"Oh, that's all right," said Jean. "I'll just come out on the interurban."

"Have you got enough money? How will you get your furnishings home?"

"I'll send them by express," said Jean. "Don't worry about me. I've got plenty of money. I'll write you the details."

"It'll be good to have you back," said her mother, and Jean could detect satisfaction in her mother's voice.

When she returned to her room, Melissa was there with stars in her eyes.

"So you're back," Jean said, suddenly recalling where she had last seen Melissa. "How is Johnny?"

"Johnny is just fine," caroled Melissa, hugging Jean. "Johnny is wonderful, Johnny is a dreamboat, and I'm going to marry him—lucky, lucky me!"

"Well, this is good news," said Jean, surprised in spite of herself. "Did someone leave him a million dollars?"

Melissa looked at her reproachfully.

"Why, Jean, how you talk! As if I cared about money, when I can have Johnny!"

[20]

JOHNNY AND MELISSA TOOK JEAN TO THE TRAIN ON WEDNESDAY night. Melissa, who had planned to leave on Monday, changed her plans to stay on campus as long as Johnny would be there. Johnny teased Jean about being a matchmaker and Melissa teased her about rushing home to mend her own fences. It was a gay leave-taking.

Johnny was going to defer his enlistment, since he and Melissa were engaged, and he hoped to be able, with his degree next year, to get a commission. If that came through, as he confidently expected it to do, he and Melissa would be married in the following July and she would go to his base with him.

"What about your degree?" Jean asked Melissa.

"I'll do part-time work on it here and there," Melissa said. "I can do almost a year's work while Johnny is overseas. And when he gets back he's going on to a doctor's degree, and I'll finish up then. He has decided," she said with great pride, "to be a college professor, and we'll travel every summer."

Johnny grinned. "Melissa didn't think life on a freighter sounded so good," he said, "and I figure I'll see quite a lot of the world in the Navy. We'll get around. But she's worth staying home for." They looked at each other with an expression that brought a lump to Jean's throat.

They waved from the platform as the train pulled out. Jean settled back and watched the Indiana country roll by for hours as the light left the sky and the darkness settled down, the small towns flashing past, the white, green-roofed barns, the rich farmlands, thinking about her own reasons for going home by train. Then she curled up in the coach seat and slept.

When she awoke, they were coming into the southern outskirts of Chicago at five thirty in the morning, and the conductor was announcing that they were due in the depot in half an hour. She washed her face, brushed her hair, shook out her skirt, and settled herself to wait the longest thirty minutes of the trip. She would take a taxi to the subway, she planned, and at seven thirty she would be having breakfast at home. She would call Scotty at nine o'clock. He had an exam today, she remembered. But surely he would have time to see her for a few minutes — tonight, if not before.

The train began to slow down and coast into the terminal for what seemed miles. She thought it was never going to stop.

She looked at her hat in the mirror, freshened her lipstick again, picked up her handbag, and stood in the aisle waiting for the train to stop. The baggage had to be handed off first. She saw her suitcases on the truck and wondered if she could find them when she got off.

And then at last, a suitcase in each hand, she was walking toward the exit from the train shed. Inside of an hour she would be home. No one could meet her, she kept reminding herself. But in spite of that she kept watching the doors, wondering if someone might have come.

Someone had, and she could not believe it.

Coming toward her, with a grin like sunshine and the bouncy step she knew so well, was Scotty.

"Hi, Jean. Give me your bags."

She let him take them. "Scotty, you're an angel! How did you know I was coming in this morning?"

"Your mother told me last evening, when we were all sitting out in the back yard," he slowed his stride to hers. "She was feeling kind of bad that nobody in the family could meet you. So I said: 'This is where I come in, folks. I'll flag that train!'"

He steered her around to where the car was parked and put the bags in the trunk.

Driving through Chicago with Scotty, Jean had a stretching sense of growth. It seemed impossible that she could have been so young last fall when she went away, that she could have grown so much in this year. She looked at Scotty, whose eyes were fixed on the road. He did not seem so much older now as he once had. She thought, with a comforting sense of success, that she was catching up with him, that she was growing up at last. And when she settled down beside him, he dropped his hand on hers for a minute, with a warm pressure that seemed to confirm her thoughts.

"How come you decided to come in today?" he asked abruptly, as he moved into the eastbound traffic.

She felt a little ridiculous, and then she thought, oh, well, what's the use of stalling around?

"I wanted to see you before you left for Europe," she said, keeping her eyes on the traffic signal and trying to keep her voice steady.

"You *what?*" They stopped for a red light, and he looked at her as if he were begging her not to tease him. She was touched at the pleading in his voice.

"I got to thinking of you going away for all summer," she said, twisting her fingers as she talked, "and I just wanted to see you again. I thought — some of the things that happened

this year were mistakes — and, anyway, they're past — "

He had maneuvered into a right-hand lane, and he made a turn into La Salle Street, still deserted at this hour of the morning, a shadowed canyon between the skyscrapers. He parked beside the curb and turned to Jean.

" I couldn't drive in traffic when you say things like that," he reached out and took both her hands. " Say it again, slowly. You mean you wanted to see me that much? "

" I wanted to see you terribly," she said. " Oh, Scotty, I've been missing you so! "

He caught her in his arms and kissed her soundly.

" I've been missing you all year," he said. " Sometimes I've been afraid it was going to be for keeps."

Jean shook her head and laughed at him through tears of joy.

" I was afraid last summer," she said, holding tightly to his hand. " I had to be so sure. I couldn't make a mistake about *you*. And then I almost made the worst possible mistake — and when I knew what I wanted, I was afraid perhaps you'd changed your mind."

" I was never going to change my mind." Scotty looked down the empty street. At the far end the early rays of the sun lighted the top of the Board of Trade building with a bright glow. " But I sure was worried — "

" You'll never have to worry again," Jean promised.

" Can we count on that? "

" For sure! "

" We've got today," he said, with a faraway look, " all day — before and after my exam. And this evening. I'd just as soon not go to Europe now."

She laughed aloud. " It's good for you, you know. I'll be in Colorado with a summer job. And fall isn't so far away now."

" Those cowpunchers are kind of attractive," he brooded. " I

don't know that I'm so keen about your spending the summer in Colorado."

"Silly boy!" she protested as he kissed her again. "Didn't I just tell you you had nothing to worry about?"

He put the car in gear, and they rolled slowly toward the end of the canyon.

"The first date will be for breakfast," he planned, "and the second until the afternoon exam. The third will be tonight at seven sharp."

"The fourth will be for the day you come home," Jean promised. "And I'll save all the rest of them for you too. All next year."

He didn't hear that because he was concentrating on making a left turn at a stop sign. But it didn't matter. There would be lots of time to tell him that she was going to stay home next year and go to Northern University with him.

Biography of Anne Emery

Anne Emery was born Anne Eleanor McGuigan in Fargo, North Dakota. She has lived in Evanston, Illinois, since she was nine years old, and there attended Evanston Township High School and took a B. A. degree at Northwestern University.

Following her graduation, her father, a professor of pharmacology and therapeutics at the University of Illinois, took the family abroad for a year, where they visited his birthplace in northern Ireland and toured the British Isles, France, Switzerland, and Italy. She spent nine months studying at the University of Grenoble in France.

Upon return, Anne McGuigan taught in the Evanston schools, four years in the seventh and eighth grades, at Haven Intermediate School, and, after her marriage in 1933 to John D. Emery, six more years in the fourth and fifth grades at Orrington School.

Then she retired from teaching to keep house and take care of her family. There are now five young Emerys: Mary, Kate, Joan, Robert, and Martha. The two older girls are now in high school, and supply many details for the high school background of Mrs. Emery's books.

(Continued from front flap)

that she is going to be ... can't get.

The year is crowded with new experiences and insights for Jean Burnaby. And when it ends she finds that she has come to know herself a lot better than she did at the start.

An exciting, warm story of a girl with high courage and a down-to-earth philosophy, this book will be welcomed by all Anne Emery fans, especially those who have come to know and love the Burnaby family through Mrs. Emery's other popular books.

ANNE EMERY, housewife, mother, and author, is one of the most popular writers for teen-agers. Educated at Northwestern University and at the University of Grenoble, France, Mrs. Emery taught school for a number of years. But after her marriage she retired from teaching to keep house at Evanston, Illinois, to raise her five children, and to write the short stories and b... that have made her one of the best ...uthors of teen-age books today.

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